"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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THE POETRY REVIEW

MALVOLIO: THE PRIZE POETIC DRAMA

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POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

Many people find themselves, in these momentous days, able to express their feelings in poetry or drama, but are doubtful about the results, and would like helpful advice (and perhaps some "vetting") before submitting their work to publishers. The LONDON SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM has been so successful in work of this kind that it now employs upon its staff the services of an experienced author, publisher's reader and dramatist, who regularly undertake this work at a moderate charge.

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The Poetry Review

THE JOURNAL OF THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED)

AND A MAGAZINE OF GENERAL POETIC INTEREST

VOL. XXXVII 1946 NUMBER 2

THE publication here of the one-act verse play that won our recent competition is the culmination of a significant episode in a significant revival. This poetic drama competition perhaps did not inspire the writing of *Malvolio*—but it has brought it to light and recognition and a more general judgment than that of the adjudicators. Even if among the plays that were resurrected for apprizement by a tribunal anxious for something in a newer idiom and ultra-modern in design and expression, its success is the more notable. Not all among the surprisingly large number of plays submitted were dug-outs—a considerable number were experimental and despised tradition but were interesting only in showing that with little encouragement, little chance of publication or production, or even of serious consideration, attempts at verse drama are being persisted in and will be continued in spite of the paucity of reward.

This interim success of *Malvolio* will be received with relief and delight by lovers of verbal felicity. It is neither abstract nor vague, neither obscure nor tortured, neither precious nor metaphysical, but it is in the old manner comparable in eloquence and beauty of phrase with the best of that now disregarded master poet-dramatist of the last generation, Stephen Phillips.

This later Stephen left no lingering doubt about these qualities when he read this Elizabethan pastiche with fine sonority and flexibility at a recent Poetry Society meeting, with the sweet voice of Mary Kenton as the discarded Olivia, as an effective foil. The culminating "dramatic scene held the audience completely enthralled", declares *The Stage*, adding, "It is hoped that an enterprising management will produce *Twelfth Night* with Mr. Williams' episode as an epilogue. Apart from falling pleasantly on the ear the verse is ideally suited to the stage. In the right hands the situation would lend itself to some memorable acting". Until we have this desirable collaboration on the stage of Shakespeare-Williams, we trust opportunities will occur for further dramatic readings. In the meantime we commend the silent reading of this sustained verse drama, a complete entity, and not a fragment, with its definite characterisation and memorable lines that for us also "turn Illyria into Elysium" and prove that poetry still possesses

The holy fire
That lifts man's being high above himself,

That paints his mind in pictures, hoists his visions
Upon the wings of music, sets his word
Sailing upon a halcyon stream of verse."

This splendid justification of poetic drama should ensure for it some small plot in theatreland and an audience with ears. The tantalising experiment with poets' plays at the remote Mercury has produced one *succes d'estime* pegged to a combination of clear writing, intelligent symbolism, distinctive music and earnest acting inflated by social patronage. We need more solid and permanent achievements as well as endured experimentation in this temporarily neglected alpha and omega of the drama. That these is a widely scattered public eager to listen to spoken poetry and that there is entertainment value in it the Poetry Society's distinctive readings at the Comedy Theatre have demonstrated, an appeal that would be infinitely expanded by the addition of drama and its glamorous accessories of costume and action.

Thoughts in a Moonlit Garden

THIS fallen rose that now neglected lies
Beneath the bush on which it spent its days
And spread its fragrant petals to the skies
Looks lovely still, bathed in the moon's soft rays.

Its drooping petals seem in silver wrought,
So white and cold against their purple bed;
And nightingales that saw it die have brought
Their aching songs to mourn for beauty dead.

They mourn in vain. This erstwhile living flower
Lent its undying fragrance to the air
And with its beauty did enrich an hour
Of life for those who saw its freshness there.

All mortal things are fleeting and must die;
But He who gave the beauty to the rose
And to the nightingales their melody,
In everything His beauty does disclose.

There is no grief in death for those who love
Earth's beauty, for in them the striving soul
Forever yearns to reach the heights above
From whence it came and see His beauty whole.

H. Broadberry Seaman.

Malvolio

A ONE ACT PLAY IN VERSE BY STEPHEN WILLIAMS

CHARACTERS :

MALVOLIO, formerly steward to Olivia, now running an apothecary's shop ;

FABIAN, formerly servant to Olivia, now helping Malvolio in the shop ;

OLIVIA, married to Sebastian ;

MARIA, her waiting maid.

The action takes place in Malvolio's shop in Illyria, about three years after the events in Shakespeare's " Twelfth Night ".

SCENE : A room adjoining an apothecary's shop, looking out on the street. A summer evening. Malvolio, very grave and dignified, sits writing at a table on which there is a lamp. The Clown's voice is heard in the street as he passes the window.

CLOWN :

O mistress mine, where are you roaming ?
O, stay and hear ; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low :
Trip no further, pretty sweeting ;
Journeys end in lover's meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

MALVOLIO :

My grief should know that voice ; and the song, too.
Why, 'tis the song that Feste used to sing
Three years ago. How cruel its magic then !
How viciously it used to sting my sense !—
Poison in that bee's honey ! Is't possible ?
After so long—so long. (Opens window.) Yes, 'tis the Fool,
Galliarding down the street ; two women with him,
Who try to silence him. Their hooded gowns
Billow before the breeze like clouds of smoke,
And dissolve too, like smoke-clouds as they fade
Into the twilight. (Shuts window.) Miserable Clown !
Why do you break the prison of the past,
Prise open echoing dungeons in my mind
Which I thought closed for ever ? Dungeons—pah !

The stench of one still crawls into my nostrils ;
Poisoning the sweet air of this summer night—
Putrid !—but not so putrid as the gibes
Which you and Toby gibbered through the bars,
Like strident monkeys ; you, with green eyes of malice,
Toby, his nose half eaten with the pox,
His lips still speckled with the drunkard's slime.
Toby ! Whom I had thought to make my kinsman !

" O Mistress Mine "—so runs the measure. Nay,
You were my mistress only in those dreams
That stretched my senses like a viol string,
Till the note snapped and hummed out into silence,
Into air that gave it being ; then I awoke,
Awoke before the fields of heaven could flower,
And, like a creature in another play,
I cried to dream again.

Well, " Mistress Mine ",
You had your triumph ; but you could not know
The sacred essence of the dream that dies
Before the light of day disperse its colour,
And therefore dies, and therefore lives for ever ;
The flame that flickers out upon the wind
Before it sinks to ashes ; and therefore fades,
And therefore shines for ever. In my dreams
I had you. In my dreams I have you still,
Tight prisoned in a prison with no walls,
Stronger than any prison ever built
Because not built at all. (Enter Fabian.) Ah, Fabian ;
How goes our trade ?

FABIAN :

The world is full of fools.
Is that a proper answer ?

MALVOLIO :

'Tis a just one.
And, to tell truth, my conscience sometimes pricks me
That we should thrive on that preposterous birth-rate.
We are thieves, Fabian ; we rob the blind.

FABIAN :

If I were blind, that's what I should expect.

MALVOLIO :

What, robbery ?

FABIAN:

Nay, 'tis no robbery ;
No more than a musician robs a deaf man
By playing him something that he thinks is music ;
No more than a clown, who entertains a clod,
Lives by his talents. We live by our talents,
Practising them on fools who have no talents.
Are we then thieves ?

MALVOLIO:

I was a fool myself once,
And certainly I thought it thievery.

FABIAN:

You were a fool ? Now, master, recollect :
Have you forgotten then our friendly pact ?
That time when you were—shall I say ?—distraught,
I took you from the scene of your distress,
And we set up this shop——

MALVOLIO:

Yes, I remember.
I vowed I'd put the past out of my mind,
And look into the future. But, Fabian——

FABIAN:

Beware now——

MALVOLIO:

No, 'tis not the past, my friend,
It is the present : we are doing harm.

FABIAN:

Dear master, tell me : where's the harm we do ?
Sell a lame man a draught of coloured water,
He goes home happy, thinking he is cured ;
Sell an old lecher herbs to cure his lust,
He goes home happy, thinking he is impotent ;
Sell a love-philtre to a desp'rate lover,
He walks in heaven, dreaming she will love him.

MALVOLIO:

Fabian, you are a born apothecary !

FABIAN:

My mother, sir, had higher hopes for me,
But they, not she, miscarried.

MALVOLIO:

Then you think
The end of human life is to be happy ?

FABIAN:

I'd rather be a happy than a wise man.

MALVOLIO:

Not many men are both. Come, close the shutters.
There is a chill wind creeping through the night,
Colder than a dead man's hand.

FABIAN:

Why, no, 'tis warm ;
A summer night, scented and lyrical ;
Even a hint of thunder in the air.

MALVOLIO:

Then leave the window bare unto the night.
The chill's in me, perhaps ; I'm out of humour ;
Something turned over in my heart just now,
And shook my body.

FABIAN:

Shall I go and mix
A taste of your own med'cine ?

MALVOLIO:

Let me alone ;
The jest is out of season.

FABIAN:

Pray, forgive me.
The summer night is playing in my blood
A most aspiring music. I'll be gone.
I have to give a lesson to a wench,
But not in music—nor shall I need a philtre.

MALVOLIO:

Take care you do not need some other cure
Some three days afterwards——

FABIAN:

Nay, never fear :
I know too well the stuff that cure is made of !

MALVOLIO:

Forget all that and let it make you happy !
What signifies it that you are not wise ?
You go home happy, thinking you are cured.
Sell a young lecher herbs——

FABIAN :

Good, good ! you've won !
That bout is yours. But wait till I return :
Love will have lighted torches in my brain
To dazzle you with sparks of rhetoric.

MALVOLIO :

Good-night, then. (Knock) Hark ! We shut up shop too soon ;
Who knocks so late ?

FABIAN :

(At window) Two women, darkly hooded.
They say a woman's work is never done,
Here are two proofs of it. And yet perhaps
They come for play, not work.

MALVOLIO :

I'll have no play.
See what they want. (Exit Fabian.) There were two with the clown.
One looked like something out of memory ;
A shadow, like the shadow that is thrown
Sometimes between the sunlight and my eyes.
I will make sure. (Goes to window.) Yes, yes—'tis the same two ;
Their hooded cloaks still billow to the breeze,
Like clouds of smoke. The second—I was right :
I have held her in my arms so many nights
In lonely, bitter ecstasy. 'Tis she,
Olivia ! The night wind is a sculptor,
Blowing the cloak about the moulded form,
Until it stands even like a naked statue
Against the sky. Old heart, are you there still ?
Why don't you turn my ribs into a drum,
Thundering and hammering for your lost freedom ?
Why don't the heavens split and shower down blood
Upon my open eyes, choke up my mouth,
Drown all my shattered senses in the bliss
That it is death to know ? Is time so strong ?
Can it be that this ghost is laid for ever ?
(comes down centre)

I used to weep when memories
Burned like unnatural stars to keep
The lacerated heart from sleep ;
And staged for my reluctant eyes
Farces I played as tragedies.
I used to weep . . .

I weep no more ; for on my grief
Indifferent time has closed the door ;

Bringing what memory should deplore,
A bitter, barren, bare relief,
And sighs that wound—they are so brief.
I weep no more . . .

Alas, poor ghost of bygone years!
I cannot tell which hurts the most:
My memories, a luminous host,
Or this indifference, that hears
Your voice, yet cannot give you tears.
Alas, poor ghost!

(Re-enter Fabian)

FABIAN:

I told them we had done; but—as I said—
A woman's work——

MALVOLIO:

I know. Convey them in.

(Exit Fabian) (Puts on mask and turns down lamp)
She's coming in now. I can hear her step.
How calm I am! I think I have no heart.
It's still, thank God! It's cold. Time, you're my friend:
You have tamed my wild heart . . . Alas, poor ghost!

(Re-enter Fabian with Olivia and Maria, hooded and masked)

FABIAN:

Here is his worship.

OLIVIA:

Maria, wait outside.

MARIA:

Take heed, my lady; do not be misled
Into rash acts. My mind is not at rest;
May I not stay with you?

OLIVIA:

Do as I bid you.

(Fabian takes Maria out, winking at Malvolio as he goes)
The hour is late. Am I importunate?

MALVOLIO:

Lady, I have some skill in alchemy,
And what I have I sell. This is a shop;
I'm forced to earn my living by my learning.
But—learning does not stop at closing time;
My shop may shut; my mind is always open
To learn fresh things. What can I learn from you?

OLIVIA :

'Tis you must teach. I come to you for help ;
And yet I know not how to start. I fear
To tell you all——

MALVOLIO :

But you must tell me all ;
Know you not I must learn before I teach ?
How can I help you else ? Come, cast out fear ;
I think I am old enough to be your father.
Look to me as a father. Tell me all.

OLIVIA :

I want to rid my conscience of a dream
That saturates it. O you cannot know
What grief is mine ! Have you a herb—a herb—
Something to drive this poison from my heart,
Something to kill the memory of love—
Yet not a memory—No—there was no love ;
But now there is. God, must I tell you all ?
Three years ago, a man—he was my steward—
Was tricked into believing that I loved him.
I did not love him. No, I did not love him ;
My heart was guiltless—do you understand ?—
Guiltless as is a child's. I laughed at him
When he, poor wretch, poor bird in amorous plumage,
Appeared before me wearing yellow stockings—
A colour I detested—and cross-gartered—
A fashion I abhorred—I laughed at him.
Why do I tell you this ?

MALVOLIO :

You did great wrong
To laugh at love. But you must tell me all.

OLIVIA :

I did great wrong ; but not so much to him :
I did not know 'twas love ; I thought him mad ;
Perhaps he was ; madness and love are kin.
No, no, I did great wrong, but to myself :
For now 'tis I am mad. What was my mirth
Is now become my scourge.

MALVOLIO :

What do you mean ?

OLIVIA :

I am the sufferer : the love I spurned
Returns to plague me. For Malvolio,
I know not what befell him. Two days after,
He passed out of my life.

MALVOLIO :

Was that his name ?
Malvolio ? On your lips the name is music.

OLIVIA :

If music be the food of love . . . It is !
I told you that he passed out of my life.
I lied to you : he passed out of my sight ;
Yet every day and every night since then
I see him, see him with the eyes of love,
Eyes that can overleap a thousand miles.
I love him.

MALVOLIO :

Why, what rhapsody is this ?
You—*love* him ?

OLIVIA :

O, I know 'tis foul in me ;
A wife, a mother ; aye, sir, I am both.
My husband—nay, Sebastian's not my husband,
Not in the sight of God, who sees my heart.
No, not my husband, though I bore his child ;
There was no love ; life should be born of love.
Well—so it was, but not Sebastian's love.
When I looked up into Sebastian's eyes,
I saw Malvolio's ; when that child was made,
I thought not of Sebastian.
Now—you know all.
Have pity on me ! I want a cure for love,
A cure for love !

MALVOLIO :

You are a haunted woman—

OLIVIA :

Haunted. Yes, yes ; tell me, what can you do ?

MALVOLIO :

A haunted woman, and upon your heart
There is a plague-spot that you cannot cleanse
Till a new plague afflict it.

OLIVIA:

You seem moved;
There is a strange enchantment in your voice
That stirs the past. What? Have we met before?
I think you are a wizard.

MALVOLIO:

That's my trade.
I was once a fool, but now I live by fools.

OLIVIA:

I am afraid. I cannot see your eyes,
But they possess me. Let me go from here—

MALVOLIO (Rising)

You shall not go! The irony of fate
Never entangled helpless human hearts
In such a web of splendid mockery—
Aye, splendid mockery.

OLIVIA:

Mockery? What means this?
Why do you bar my way? Maria! Help!
I tell you I must go!

MALVOLIO:

You shall not go.
To let this moment pass——why, it would spoil
The most tremendous jest God ever made
To kindle laughter in eternity! (Distant thunder)
Hark! Do you hear him laughing in his thunder,
Splitting the sides of heaven with his mirth?
See how the lightning wrinkles up his face!
Olivia! (Tears off the mask and raises the lamp.)

OLIVIA:

Malvolio!

MALVOLIO:

Yes, Malvolio!
You knew not what befell Malvolio;
This—*this* befell Malvolio: God delivered
His enemy into his hand.

OLIVIA:

His enemy?
You would not murder me?

MALVOLIO :

Ha ! Never fear :
I would not be so merciful.

OLIVIA :

O, shame !
To have told all this to you—to you—to you !
Shown you my secret heart.

MALVOLIO :

I showed you mine
Three years ago.

OLIVIA :

Ah ! But you were a man ;
A man may show his heart ; a woman, never.

MALVOLIO :

What did I get for showing you my heart ?

OLIVIA :

O, do not speak of that ! Have I not wept
To think what barren weeds sprang from your love ?
Love, gentle love, whose children should be flowers,
Whose flowers should be children.

MALVOLIO :

Answer me :
What did I get for showing you my heart ?

OLIVIA :

Pain and disgrace ; but not of my creation.
I swear I did not know, I could not know,
That day when I made you my laughing stock,
How God would make me his.

MALVOLIO :

Shall I tell you
All that I got for showing you my heart ?

OLIVIA :

My tears rob me of breath. I cannot speak.

MALVOLIO :

They locked me in a madhouse cell,
And made my madness feed their mirth,
Because I thought I could compel
Beauty to rate me at my worth ;
Because I deemed my worth could make
Nature obedient to art,
And sometimes dreamed that love might take
Compassion on a hungry heart.

OLIVIA :

O, love was deaf and love was blind,
And love saw not the wound it made,
Be merciful ! You are repaid
Daily and hourly, and in kind.

MALVOLIO :

I did not care ; I had discerned
The love that strikes men blind and dumb ;
And for one blessed day had turned
Illyria to Elysium.

OLIVIA :

Illyria to Elysium !
Then you did glean some happiness ?
Some light shone down on your distress,
Some tender thought did sometimes come ?

MALVOLIO :

They locked me in a madhouse cell
Because I'd lost my wits, they said.
I breathed the prison's bitter smell,
I ate the prison's bitter bread.
I bore Sir Toby's ribald spleen
When he and Feste mocked my scars,
And scarcely heard the gibes obscene
They hooted through my window-bars.

OLIVIA :

Never by me were they designed ;
I knew nought of the pranks they played.
Be merciful ! You are repaid
Daily and hourly, and in kind.

MALVOLIO :

I did not care ; for I had burned
With fire that raised me from the scum,
And for one day and night had turned
Illyria to Elysium.

OLIVIA :

Elysium ! Why, then, you found
Some secret solace in your heart,
Some hope from which you could not part,
Some dream that raised you from the ground ?

MALVOLIO:

A dream that spanned a night and day,
And healed my heart and made it whole;
That day and night have passed away;
The dream stays ever in my soul.
My faded yellow stockings lie
Beside those garters worn for you;
As if they would persuade the eye
To tell the mind my dream was true.

OLIVIA:

Your dream was true! I know it now;
Malvolio, your dream *was* true.
And fate has led me back to you;
I will not question why or how.

MALVOLIO:

It was not true. But it was fair;
And never will I kill the lie
That bids me cherish through despair
My deathless rose of memory.

OLIVIA:

Your dream *was* true. Malvolio,
I know it now; your deathless rose
Is the undying flower that glows
Here, in my bitter heart. And so?

MALVOLIO:

And so it was that once I learned
The love that leaves all senses numb;
And, for all time to be, I turned
Illyria to Elysium.

(A long pause)

OLIVIA (Very softly):

Malvolio: need it always be a dream?

MALVOLIO:

Always. My dream is my reality.

OLIVIA:

Malvolio: what of *my* reality?

MALVOLIO:

You have left your reality at home.
Go back to it, and trouble mine no more.

OLIVIA :

Go back ! I think I never shall go back.
Malvolio : I, too, have seen the rose
That burns within the memory like a star,
Red as the blood of Christ upon the Cross ;
I, too, have known the love that strikes men blind,
And unseals women's eyes. I, too, have turned
Illyria into Elysium.

MALVOLIO :

I will not stay to hear my words blown back,
Like paper in the wind.

OLIVIA :

You shall not go !
Shall we not taste the irony of fate ?
To let this moment pass—why, it would spoil
The most tremendous jest God ever made !

MALVOLIO :

Leave me. I will not hear my dream degraded.

OLIVIA :

Have you, then, a monopoly of dreams ?
Malvolio : you are my prisoner,
Tight prisoned in a prison without walls,
Stronger than any prison ever built,
Because not built at all. I, too, have known
The dream that dies and therefore lives for ever ;
I, too, have yearned that love some day might take
Compassion on a hungry heart. Love did :
It was the love I cherished in my soul
These three years past ; the love that grew and quickened
Even as a child that leaps within the womb ;
The deathless rose of memory that changed
Illyria into Elysium.

MALVOLIO :

For you there was no need of such a change ;
For you Illyria *was* Elysium.
Do you forget Orsino's headstrong love,
Which you despised, as was your gentle fashion ?

OLIVIA :

Speak not of him ; Viola has that love.

MALVOLIO :

Sir Andrew—there was a feast spread for your wit !
A greater fool than I, if such can be ;
The boon companion of your uncle Toby.

OLIVIA :

Toby is dead.

MALVOLIO :

Of drink, I have no doubt.

OLIVIA :

It was not well to say you had no doubt.

MALVOLIO :

And, to complete the tale, Sebastian,
Whom you trapped into marriage—

OLIVIA :

—No—no trap ;
A sad mistake. I have paid for that mistake.
Daily and hourly I have paid for it.
Be merciful ! You are avenged—in kind.

MALVOLIO :

Confess, then ; there *was* something to avenge ?

OLIVIA :

Malvolio : I have opened up my heart,
As though a surgeon's knife had cut it out.
What further can I do ? You torture me.
I came here desperate for a cure for love—
No more of that. What's in your shop I know not,
What potent arts you may command I care not ;
I want no cure for love : I have found love.
Are you a man ? Can you not read my heart ?
This is the supreme hour in both our lives ;
If we reject it, we kill life itself.

MALVOLIO :

Why should we not kill life ? What has life brought
To you or me ? To you a foolish husband,
To me a love despised, a madhouse cell,
An apothecary's shop——

OLIVIA :

—A splendid dream
Which has this hour come true.

MALVOLIO :

Olivia :
That is mere woman's talk. If dreams came true,
There would be dreams no more. The holy fire
That lifts man's being high above himself,
That paints his mind in pictures, hoists his visions
Upon the wings of music, sets his words
Sailing upon a halcyon stream of verse,
Would fall to ashes. How can dreams come true?
And why should dreams come true?

OLIVIA :

You are a man ;
A man can live by dreams. I am a woman,
And for a woman dreams are not enough.

MALVOLIO :

What further do you wish?

OLIVIA :

I wish to live ;
I cannot live by dreams. Malvolio :
I want your love again, even as that day
You stood within my garden, in your eyes
The light that lit the lovers of all time,
And mirrored the bright sun.

MALVOLIO :

You laughed at me.

OLIVIA :

O yes, I laughed at you ; scourge me with that ;
Say it again—again ! I thought you mad ;
But now I know too well that *I* was mad.
Now that my eyes are open to the truth,
I laugh no more. Malvolio, say you love me—
You love me !

MALVOLIO :

No, I will not, cannot love you !
I hate you now because you laugh no more.
You? Who are you? I know you not. I love
The "Fortunate Unhappy", she who laughed
To see that vain, deceived, bedraggled peacock,
Brave in his yellow stockings and cross-garters,
On that June day, ringed round with laughing flowers ;
Laughed with the music of heaven in her laugh.

She whom I love was haughty, proud and cruel.
She was a queen enthroned within my being,
She was a star enshrined within my soul,
She was a goddess crowned in paradise.
I have her still ; never can she elude me ;
Never can she withhold her queenly presence ;
Never can she reject the offerings
I lay before her in the dust of dreams,
Humble, yet deathly proud. I am her slave,
Rejoicing in my servitude. And you—
Wife of Sebastian—mother of his child—
You come to me with love, with mortal love ;
You come to break this box of spikenard,
To tear the fabric of this fantasy,
Dig up this buried treasure. O, your love,
Your vanity, your itching lust to shatter
This holy shrine, and raise one to yourself—
Wife of Sebastian—mother of his child !
How can you think that I would change that dream
For this reality ?

OLIVIA :

Malvolio :

Cast out this dream, shake off this fantasy,
And live, Malvolio. Life calls to us ;
Why should we struggle ? Why should we resist ?
We are caught fast within the toils of life,
Caught in its wheel and whirled round at its pleasure—
Its pleasure ! And *our* pleasure—what of that ?
Love spreads her golden pasture at our feet
To tread into delight, as the wine-pressers
Tread out the teeming grapes. Immortal longings
Heave up their urgent clamours in our breasts.
Our children : they are crying to be born.
Do you not hear them, singing in your blood,
Singing the song that rises above death ?

MALVOLIO :

I can hear nothing but your voice.

OLIVIA :

Behold me :

Is not my hair enticing to your eye,
Soft to your touch ? Touch it, Malvolio.
(He puts out his hand, shudders and draws it back)
Is not my flesh desirable ? 'Tis white,
(She draws down her dress, revealing part of her breast)
White as the moon when she lies on her back,
Quivering with ardour for the cloud's embrace.

I am your moon ; you are my cloud, Malvolio—
Stifle me, cover me with your vast embrace !
See, see, my flesh is white. Touch it, Malvolio,
Touch it ! Sebastian kisses my twin breasts,
When he bends over me and girdles me
With his strong arms as with a belt of love.
Why should it be Sebastian ? Why not you ?
Your arms are strong—enfold me with your arms—
Press me to death with love——

MALVOLIO :

Ah ! Godless harlot !
My hate and not my love shall overpower you.
You have thrown filth upon my memories,
Debased the image of what once you were.
My dream shall live, the reality shall die !
(Draws a knife and points it at her breast)

OLIVIA (Inspired) :

Look in my eyes, Malvolio, look in my eyes !
Why should you heed a dying woman's cries ?
E'en though their sharpness make you catch your breath ;
E'en though they ring in your brain until your death ?

Say are you brave, Malvolio, are you brave ?
Dare you destroy the truth, your dream to save ?
Be strong, Malvolio, summon what strength you can
Against the power that woman has over man.

Look in my eyes, Malvolio, look in my eyes !
Let them not shake your purpose. Are you not wise ?
Here is my breast ; an opening flower 'tis like ;
Look then, Malvolio, look in my eyes—and strike !

MALVOLIO (Drops dagger) :

Fool ! I am still the fool that earned your laughter
That day in the garden. See my yellow stockings,
If you have eyes. And garters—yes, cross-garters,
Not on my legs, but in my burning brain,
My cracked and burning brain ! O, fool ! fool ! fool !
(Buries his face in his hands over the table)

OLIVIA :

Nay, you are wise as you are cruel. I go.
We have both lost our senses in this darkness.

MALVOLIO :

Lady, you are free to go. You leave this house
Unchanged in soul and body.

OLIVIA:

Not in soul.

MALVOLIO:

I will not touch your beauty with my hands,
Nor with this useless dagger.

OLIVIA:

I could have wished
For one fate or the other; better, both:
I could have wished your hands had given me life,
And, after, death; death as a swift release
From that transcendent and divine unrest
Makes life too strong for life. Both you denied me;
I have gained nor love nor death. The jest is over.
Farewell. May God have pity on your heart—
And on mine, too. (Exit)

MALVOLIO:

God will do as God wills.

(Malvolio stands for a moment looking after her. Then he sits at the table, opens a great book and stares in front of him. Voices are heard outside and the shutting of a door. Then the Clown's voice as he passes down the street, escorting Olivia and Maria.)

CLOWN:

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

CURTAIN.

Denial

I WOULD deny, and in denying know
that it were wisdom to be tortured so,
if by denying I could bring once more
your step within the arches of my door.

I would deny the hour that was good,
the urge of body, the replenished food,
counting the cost a favour, aching-sweet,
if by such sacrifice love were complete.

New York. *Marguerite Janvrin Adams.*

Devotion

IF this were all, this happy spring,
Love's bourgeoning, unsummered year,
I would not know the endless pain
Of dreams unconsummated here.

I would not know the empty hours,
My heart disarmed, its treasure fled,
Nor feel brief separation's loss,
As though, my dear love, you were dead.

I would not sense the wilderness,
Within my uncompanioned mind,
Where every day I search for you,
Where every night my eyes are blind.

Only the listening night can hear,
Only the watchful stars can see
My dereliction, when my heart
Wearies with broken unity.

Love's emblem, glowing on my cheek,
Proclaims to every glancing eye
In thought and purpose we are one,
In every tear, in every sigh.

What alchemy would fuse our veins,
What sorcery would make us one,
If this were all there was of Love,
So soon to wither and be done?

Had we but known the orphean peak,
The luscious vale, th' abysm's rout,
Would we have smiled when first we met?
A thousand affirmations shout!

Had we but known the quenchless heart,
The servitude, the thirst, the gall,
Would we have hazarded our peace
In Love's first kiss, if this were all?

If this were all, if this were all,
Yet, still, with rosemary and rue,
I'd rather have this other Troy,
And write an Iliad anew.

Thomas Morgan McGurk.

The Sea

LONG have I known the sea, and this is my word:
It is like a great piston moving in well-oiled ways.
It is like a great cat, snarling in a circus cage.
It is like a stampede of horses, their white manes
flying.
It is like a child laughing and the sunlight
kissing it.
It is the rain and the cool winds and the great cleanser.
It is a power thundering and the playmate of children.
It is a dark cauldron, spewing misshapen things.
It is a mighty destroyer, yet the feeder of nations.
Men cast out their nets and it gives of its treasure,
Or withholds its mercy, and the weeping of women is sad,
like sea birds.
It is the sub-god, the creator of all things.
It is our mother, the ancient one, and that which she
gives she takes.
Long have I known the sea and this is my word:
It is a maiden who keeps her lovers, even in death.

Liverpool. *W. V. Wall.*

Summer Night

O LOVELY May, and lovelier June,
When fragrant night outblossoms day,
And hush of twilight, far too soon
Must fade to dark, and slip away.
Over the oak, one far, faint star
Trembles in loneliness of light,
And spectral whispers, from afar
Herald the near approach of night.
I walk where the flowering meadowsweet
Scatters its fragrance on the grass,
And flowers, crushed beneath my feet,
Break into perfume as I pass.
I hear the thrush's evensong
Fall note by note, so sweet, so slow.
Oh lovely world where I belong!
Must you, too, fade and must I go
Treading the old, familiar way,
Leaving the silence and the moon?
Stay!—for to-morrow's busy day
Comes all too soon, comes all too soon.

Winifred J. Griffiths.

Life, Love, Faith

To G——

In the noon of my life
When the earth was arock with the dread, dire din of bloody war,
I met my love,
I woo'd my love,
I won my love.

Nigh thirty busy, radiant years are gone,
With one dark passage through the vale of grief.

In the eve of my life,
And the sons of Man yet again deathlocked in battle and hate,
I woo my love,
I hold my love,
I love my love.

The noon of my life?
The eve of my life?
But God is Life, Life God,
Unbodied, immaterial—
No noon of Life,
No eve of Life,
But Life, divine, ethereal,
Eternal in the Heavens and on earth now.

And Love? Why, God is Love,
The love of my love of the essence of Him
Who ever has loved and ever shall love.

But what, some ask, of death and bloody war?
And what of mortal terror and dismay?
The raucous screams of hatred-maddened men?
Ay, and the rending grief of our child lost?

As God is Love, we know that these
Are but the passing, fevered dreams
Of dust-begotten man unknown to Him,
Him whose pure eyes behold no evil, and whose
Creatures are of the Spirit, spiritual.
The dawn of the glorious Truth of Life as the
children of God,
Will brighten our soft awakening, understanding, Peace.

This much we know, both you and I.
Meanwhile, just you and I,

And, maybe, others too,
Shall live serene on earth,
Secure in our own love
For knowing whence it comes,
By Holy Spirit taught
Eternity awaits it
In God's own arms—
My Dear.

Dec. 16, 1945. *Malcolm A. Robertson.*

$X = \sqrt{-y}$

THE children leave their crying,
The lover leaves his bed:
For the magpie singly flying,
The ladder overhead,
Tell that the world is dying,
Tell that all love is dead.

The instrument is broken,
The singer's voice is dumb;
Now the last word is spoken,
And soon the end will come:
There is no charm or token,
And all things must succumb.

The cherry tree will flower,
But never will be seen;
The freshness of the shower
Will make the garden green:
But man will have no power
To gaze upon the scene.

Turn, turn from the windowpane
And pull the shutters down:
We will not need to see again
The gems in Beauty's crown;
For all the streams are filled with rain
And Love is left to drown.

O stop the music's gentle beat
And throw your pen away,
As Fear slips down the lampless street,
Hawk-harlot seeking prey.
We see night move with furtive feet,
And wait in vain for day.

R.N.V.R., D.S.C. *John Godley.*

Byron Now

AFTER Shakespeare, Byron is probably the most discussed poet in English literature, yet for a different reason. For whereas with Shakespeare it is his poetry which is discussed and of his life so little is known that but little can be discussed, with Byron it is his life which is the cynosure of most minds and of his poetry little is widely known beyond a few lyrics. Few of us wish to know no more of Shakespeare's life: indeed the paucity of record irks us, for there is much that is dark in his poetry which only the facts of his life could illuminate. Yet we cannot but be glad that not so much of it is known as would lead men in their inquisitive passion for scandal to ignore his poetry, there being small time for both. So Shakespeare has been fortunate, for who can doubt that his life was not "all that it should have been"?

But Byron has been unfortunate in this respect. In his own day his poems, all of them, long and short, narrative and satirical, sold in their tens of thousands of copies. No doubt they sold because they were "by Byron", "the prime object of interest this season in the fashionable world of London", as Scott has told us. Still, they were bought and, what is more, they were read: contemporary evidence leaves no doubt of that.

Poets die, however, and legends persist; and though after Byron was dead his poetry lived on for a time as the most widely read of all poetry before or since, men's minds gradually shifted away as new poets and new legends arose and new tasks presented themselves. There were other things to do in Victoria's England than read "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan". Slowly, inevitably, the poems settled down on the shelves and less and less did fashionable or unfashionable London take them down.

But men do not cease to be fascinated by men, however much fashions change and new tasks have to be faced. A man's poetry may fall from popularity, but if his life was strange and wild and, above all, wicked, if he did all those things which other men would like to do but have neither the opportunity nor the courage, he himself is sure of some immortality. And so it is that Byron is as much a household word to-day as he was in 1824. A century has hidden "Don Juan" from the public at large but has kept Byron in the forefront of its curiosity. The time has come this long year since that the balance be restored and Byron the poet be known no less well than Byron the man, especially as, in reality, the poet and the man are one and indivisible: the dichotomy of a century has been an unnatural severing at the hands of ill-balanced men.

Perhaps no man has been or could be more self-obsessed than Byron. From the moment he was first conceived he was interested to an exaggerated degree in himself, for he was the traditional Byron, one of the great legendary Byrons, and, moreover, the one predestined to make the family name live for ever. As a prolific poet we might have expected him to be chiefly concerned with poetry, but at the age of 19 he was able to make a pronouncement that was true then and remained true throughout his life: "Poetry is not my primary vocation". He was right: Byron was his primary vocation.

It is time already, therefore, to determine why this self-obsessed man and his poetry are important. That his private and public life should be notorious is of no importance, certainly of no literary importance. Many another man has been divorced, enjoyed innumerable mistresses, and loved incestuously: such experiences alone do not confer significance on a man, let alone greatness. Nor have they conferred anything on Byron except notoriety.

Yet they cannot be ignored, for the man who was divorced, enjoyed innumerable mistresses and loved incestuously, was Byron the poet, and it was Byron the poet who loved incestuously, enjoyed innumerable mistresses and was divorced. Of other poets we might read about their lives and feel no especial desire to read their poems, or we might read their poems and not wish unduly to read about their lives. The details of the life of Wordsworth add almost nothing to his poems; nothing in Oscar Wilde's poetry is as interesting as his unfortunate life. But, always assuming that one is not a mere seeker after scandal—and far too many Victorians were that no less than contemporary Englishmen are—it would make little difference which one were to read first, about Byron's life—in his own journal and letters or in any of the several biographies which have been written—or his poetry: the desire to know the other amounts to an impatient necessity. For his life was the physical expression of his poetry, and his poetry is the literary expression of his life. It is the most personal poetry in our literature, for he is seldom absent from it, and as he was perhaps the most interesting personality, both psychologically and intellectually, who ever wrote poetry, that poetry is perhaps the most interesting for all those at least who find man the most interesting of studies.

It is the dominating paradox of the self-obsessed to be ever striving and ever failing to be rid of the obsession. The obsessed hates most what he loves most. "To withdraw myself from myself (oh that cursed selfishness!)," wrote Byron, "has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in scribbling at all"; and then, in the same letter and as it were in the next breath: "for the soul of me, I cannot and will not give the lie to my own thoughts and doubts, come what may." By his very nature, however, he could never withdraw himself from himself, and so he never stopped scribbling. Poetry poured from him as music poured from Mozart. "I write with rapidity, and rarely with pains." So poem after poem hurried from his pen; and yet over all hovered an almost instinctive artistry. For Byron was an artist in spite of himself and his haste, handling whatever verse-form he chose, simple or complicated, with the same consummate ease with which he handled his mirror. No literary artifice with him, no patient seeking for a rhyme: either the rhyme was there to hand, or it must be found quickly: the whole poem is what matters, and there is no time to delay over the single line or rhyme:

"And if in the mean time her husband died—
But Heaven forbid that such a thought should cross

Her brain, though in a dream! (and then she sighed)
Never could she survive that common loss;
But just suppose that moment should betide,
I only say suppose it—'inter nos'.
(This should be 'entre nous', for Julia thought
In French, but then the rhyme would go for nought.)"

In such unprecedented honesty we see the self-obsessed poet who must tell all, and this is the significance of Byron's self-obsession. For there is no compromising strength in the weakness of the obsessed: it is all or nothing with him, usually all. "I cannot and will not give the lie to my own thoughts and doubts, come what may." Nor did he. Line upon line, canto after canto of the most wonderful scribbling the world has yet seen express his own thoughts and doubts without fear or favour: himself a child of fear, his poetry is fearless. Professor Garrod has said that "the fear of himself is audible in his poetry": but the fear of himself created his poetry and is his poetry. It is seen in his constant insistence upon his own superiority to and horror of the mass of men at one moment, and his championing of their rights at the next. Manfred disdains

"to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I,"

and complains that

"If the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again."

But this same Manfred it was who invaded the sanctity of the Upper House and shocked their lordships:

"It is the mob that labour in your fields and serve in your houses, that man your navy, and recruit your army, that have enabled you to defy all the world, and can also defy you when neglect and calamity have driven to despair."

And it was this same Manfred who made game of undemocratic governments and aristocracies in Europe and at home, and died among ordinary men fighting for their freedom against the foreign despot—in Greece.

This fear of and obsession with himself gave him too the consistency which he imagined he lacked. Earnest in jest as usual, he wrote: "I have no consistency, except in politics, and that probably arises from my indifference to the subject altogether". Yet none is more consistent than the obsessed, no poet was more consistent than Byron: in sincerity, in candour, in downrightness, in courage, and in a fierce hatred of moral pretence, social convention, political jobbery and literary traditionalism.

What, it may now be asked, has all this to do with the divorce, the mistresses and Augusta? The answer is: everything. For Byron was all of a piece, unvaried from first to last, dying before age might have wrought a change; and his sexual life, his love, his personal relationships,

were all conditioned by the self-obsession which was a tyranny within himself and sent him raging against every form of external tyranny. His whole life was an expression of this inherent paradox. From his love for Augusta he could not even try hard to rescue himself, but from the love of other women, who pursued him with all the unrelenting passion with which the family furies, and his mother, pursued him, he was ever seeking to escape. So he must love many—high ones and low ones, countesses and country lasses. So he must pass through the trial of marriage, only to escape from it as soon as possible. This inborn hysteria, this incessant desire to escape, is what made Byron the greatest of all poets of freedom; to his shattered nerves all who fight for human liberty owe an incalculable debt.

In this way only can his private, personal life be seen in its correct perspective: in this way only is it seen as a part of the whole phenomenon of Byron. Otherwise it is a drawing-room scandal of the most pornographic kind.

Such a man could not but write unique poetry. As Goethe realised, Byron stands outside the tradition of great English poetry, and there has been nothing in English literature so far to compare with "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan". Byron stands apart from other poets as he stood apart, and wished to stand apart, from other men. It is the custom of literary historians to label the poets who lived from about 1790 to 1830 "Romantics" and to speak of "Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Byron" as though they were all poets of the same order. Certainly there are similarities among the first four, but Byron had nothing in common with any of them except in the "Tales" and plays and, in his major works, on those rare occasions when, for a few stanzas, he seems to be saying to them: "I know how to write your kind of poetry. Look, it is easy"—and there follow lines of a verbal and rhythmic beauty unsurpassed by anything our greatest lyricists have written. But these were exceptional moments, moments almost of forgetfulness, and they were soon rudely ended. For Byron despised Wordsworth and Coleridge and had little in common with Keats or even with Shelley, and although he professed to admire Pope, Rogers and Scott before all other poets and followed their styles in his tales and satires, when it came to "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan" there was no school or type of poetry to which he felt any allegiance: instead, he rushed ahead with the creation of a poetry wholly untypical of English literature, a poetry without English parallel. For what, in brief, is the subject of most English poetry? It is Wordsworth's "sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused". But Byron, more aware of it than was good for him, his attitude to it excessively ambivalent, could use his poetry only in an attempt to escape from it, for like everything else it was identified with himself. So he could write truthfully:

"I hate all mystery, and that air
Of claptrap, which your recent poets prize."

Only a Byron could call Wordsworth's poetry claptrap; and only from Byron is such a word intelligible and tolerable. For Wordsworth, as for Shelley, this "mystery" was a religion: for Byron it was a superstition.

Outside England, and particularly in France, Byron is ranked as poet next after Shakespeare, but the interest taken in him by continental readers and critics is not sentimental nor is it scandalous. Their moral standards are different from ours, and Byron fell in with the continental way of life as he could not fall in with ours. There are no "cavalier servente's" in England. But the esteem in which he is held by foreigners is not only due to the fact that he was so un-English, so destructive of English images—Shelley might have been their first choice if this was all they looked for in English poets; for Byron expressed in his poetry more than iconoclasm: he expressed freedom from convention, a refusal to play the imitative role, a candour and an intellectual scepticism which are out of order in English society but are the very stuff of educated continental, and particularly French, society.

The uniqueness of Byron in these respects puts us Englishmen at a disadvantage. We are used to Wordsworth and Tennyson, and we are a nation of freak-haters, liable to rank as freak both a Byron and a two-headed monster. But once we are aware of this disadvantage, we can cherish both our "great" poets and Byron. We shall cherish him because he is unique, because he is Byron. Man, poet, journal and letter writer, all are one: one wellnigh incredible phenomenon, standing alone in a blaze of light in which, itself once seen, everything else must be seen. Our other poets are great only if their poetry can survive this illumination, and in its revealing power our own honesty is put to the test. What dare we think of the poet of "Don Juan"? This poet who shocks us with his difference from what we have come to expect of English poets; this enemy of cant and hypocrisy, who cannot take even himself seriously and calls his poetry "scribbling"; this fearless champion of the individual opinion; this man who sets his poem dancing along a tightrope and thrills us with his daring; this poet who, haunted by ghosts, lays them all in his poem and all our ghosts with them—for, behold, the terrible monk is only "The phantom of her frolic Grace—Fitz-Fulke!"

"Don Juan" is his masterpiece. It is not merely a poem, it is a hundred things in one, and only death put an end to it. Only Byron could have succeeded with such a *tour de force;* in any other's hands it would have never ceased to be a shuffling rag-bag of interludes and quips: in his hands it is life on parade, it is punch-and-judy and grand opera, it is the most glorious pantomime ever written. For Byron is the only major poet who has made fun of his art in the process of its creation, and survived; he is the only one who has made such fun an art itself. Beside him Chaucer is the high priest of artistic over-conscientiousness. Never for a moment in "Don Juan" are we allowed the traditional luxury of illusion, yet never for a moment do we wish that it were otherwise. What seems to be a miracle happens: "Don Juan" is a poetic success. Yet it is no miracle but

an intelligible fact. For this is no fable of Don Juan, no tale, no fiction. "I detest all fiction, even in song," the ubiquitous poet reminds us in canto 6 lest we should even try to imagine that it is a tale that we are reading. No, this is no merry tale of Don Juan. This is an autobiography, a scrap-book in verse, a commentary on life, a universal miscellany to which is yet given a unity and a continuity by the omnipresent personality of the poet, "a personality," wrote Goethe, "such, for its eminence, as is not likely to come again".

But "Don Juan" is his greatest poem, and there is no wish here to suggest that everything which he wrote is of the same order of importance. His juvenilia, "Hours of Idleness", are no more than pretty and clever verses; his tales and plays, in which he did try to create some illusion, are comparatively tedious. For the essential Byron is not so often seen in them, and it is the essential Byron which matters and which is the subject of all his best work.

What this essential Byron is "Don Juan" paints to the life:

> "Ne'er doubt
> This—when I speak, I don't hint, but speak out."

It is a picture of a man who had faith, who even worshipped:

> "Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
> In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
> But set those persons down with me to pray,
> And you shall see who has the properest notion
> Of getting into heaven the shortest way;
> My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
> Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
> Who hath produced, and will receive the soul."

It is a picture of a man who thought on "ultimate things" no less than did his "romantic" contemporaries, but a man who knew no answers to his questions and yet did not pretend that he knew any, who took reality for reality and did not confuse speculation with truth:

> "My tendency is to philosophise
> On most things, from a tyrant to a tree;
> But still the spouseless virgin Knowledge flies.
> What are we? and whence came we? what shall be
> Our ultimate existence; what's our present?
> Are questions answerless, and yet incessant."

We cannot blame him, therefore, because what other men took for facts did not appear to him as facts, and we cannot but rejoice that he said so. Nor are we entitled to reject his honesty and dismiss him, as some critics have dismissed him, as a mere society entertainer. Shelley, not an insignificant judge of poetry, said of that part of "Don Juan" which Byron had read to him: "every word is stamped with immortality"; Shelley, too, considered that the address to ocean at the end of canto 4 of "Childe Harold" was alone sufficient to prove him a great poet. Goethe ranked him among the highest; and Matthew Arnold placed him, with

Wordsworth, "first and pre-eminent, a glorious pair, among the English poets" of the 19th century.

But he cannot satisfactorily be "placed" or compared. He is Byron and must be taken or left; and those of us who believe that they who leave him do so at their peril cannot be blamed if, following his example, we say so. And we say what is to us demonstrable fact. This is no society entertainer, indeed. For behind all the destruction, the hysteria, the fun, the obsession, the Byronic cavalcade, there stands, four-square, an intention no less serious than Wordsworth's or Shelley's. It has nothing to do with intangibles, with metaphysics, Christianity, beauty, for Byron could not advise men on these things. It is aimed at the actual world of men and the society in which they live, in particular that form of it of which Byron had had such intimate experience and which affects us all in one way or other, few of us to our contentment.

"My business is to dress society,
And stuff with sage that very verdant goose."

All who know a little French know what Byron meant to do, and all who have read his poetry know that he did it with all the zest and skill of a master. It is not Byron's fault that the goose is still verdant and unstuffed, that it would rather read about the Countess Guiccioli than read his poems. Yet he did not write in vain. His poetry is here among us for all to read, its message clear as at first. And now that men are thinking anew, this poetry will come into its own again, more contemporary than any poetry of our time.

"There will be blood shed like water and tears like mist, but the people will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it."

Byron, thou art living at this hour!

W. G. Bebbington.

Caedmon for Children

OLD English Caedmon, so I read,
Was a cattleman for need,
First sang Heaven and Hell.
Was a cowman, runs the tale,
And versed the Word for Bede,
For Junius and Coverdale
And the rest to spell.

Here's the perfect tale:
He for warmth lay with the sheep,
Lilting to the lambs in fold
New-made rhymes in accents old.

He for lack of furniture,
Chair and table, fire and bed,
Leaned upon the beasts instead.
Leaned upon their backs in byre,
Spread his parchment on a yoke,
Strove to please the Abbey folk
In his winter sheltering;
Dreamed that he could sing
Despite his humble station,
And wrote by rushlight till the day
The tale of the Creation,
And at first beam rose and ran
To tell his vision as thus he lay
To bailiff, farm-hand, dairymaid, man,
In wonder and elation;
To cow and cock and broody hen,
To bantam-egg hid in the hay,
To all and sundry, and, so they say,
In joy and jubilation.
So this great tale through centuries rang
From nation unto nation,
How English Caedmon dreamt and sang.
Smile and wink your eye and say:
"Alighieri was not born;
Long ere Milton saw the day
Caedmon hailed the star of morn
From the dung and clay."

Dorothy Wellesley.

Beyond

O, JUST beyond life's little consciousness
There is some sweetness subtle and apart,
An utter joy that wakes within the heart,
Emotion high and purified of stress.

For when the weary brain is on the brink
Of sleep and all the senses seek repose,
Then sometimes in the breast a beauty glows
That has no earthly face, no mortal link.

It is as if when quietness is come
And the loud, faulty day has ceased to be,
In a strong surge of love and memory
The exiled spirit turns a moment home.

Nancy Pollok.

The Magic of Walter de la Mare

THE Burning-Glass and Other Poems (Faber, 7s. 6d.) is the first volume of new poems by Walter de la Mare to be published since 1938. Beautifully produced, a delight to handle, to read and to think about, this book contains 74 poems which, writes Mr. de la Mare, "have various origins in time, mood and place. Some of them were written many years ago, and have since been revised; others recently".

This outstanding book of poems will well repay careful reading, for it is imbued with a haunting loveliness, a depth and intensity of thought, an understanding and love of life, a meditative maturity and a tolerant wisdom expressed with subtle artistry: the work of a rare and original poet who writes—and sings—in his own serene and inimitable manner.

The first poem in the book, "A Portrait", is a fine character sketch, apparently autobiographical, shedding light on the poet's individuality and illuminating many of the other poems:

> "Old: yet unchanged; still pottering in his thoughts;
> Still eagerly enslaved by books and print;
> Less plagued, perhaps, by rigid must and oughts,
> But no less frantic in vain argument . . .
>
> Haunted by questions no man answered yet;
> Pining to leap from A clean on to Z;
> Absorbed by problems which the wise forget;
> Avid for fantasy—yet how staid a head! . . .
>
> A feeble venturer—in a world so wide!
> So rich in action, daring, cunning, strife!
> You'd think, poor soul, he had taken Sloth for bride,—
> Unless the imagined is the breath of life;
>
> Unless to speculate bring virgin gold,
> And Let's-pretend can range the seven seas,
> And dreams are not mere tales by idiot told,
> And tongueless truth may hide in fantasies. . . .
>
> One yet how often the prey of doubt and fear,
> Of bleak despondence, stark anxiety;
> Ardent for what is neither now nor here,
> An Orpheus fainting for Eurydice. . . .
>
> A foolish, fond old man, his bed-time nigh,
> Who still at western window stays to win
> A transient respite from the latening sky,
> And scarce can bear it when the sun goes in."

This, in its entirety, reveals much of Mr. de la Mare—the man, his work, his beliefs, his aspirations and his love. Another fine portrait is "The Recluse" which is in the form of an epitaph.

The other poems cover a wide and rich variety of themes: regret in age at the passage of time and the approach of death, grief for the loss of a loved one, nature, philosophy, the shadowy realm of the imagination, unrequited love, epigrams, and a number of miscellaneous poems on various subjects—all treated in Mr. de la Mare's very individual manner.

Perhaps the most recurrent theme in the book is the poet's regret at the passage of time and his gentle resignation to the inevitable. On this theme is "The Rapids", one of the loveliest poems in this collection:

"Grieve must my heart. Age hastens by.
No longing can stay Time's torrent now . . .
Yet, as a thorn its drop of dew
Treasures in shadow, crystal clear,
All that I loved I love anew,
Now parting draweth near."

"Not One" is another beautiful poem on this theme.

Scattered throughout the book, sometimes in complete poems, sometimes in lines, there is evidence that the poet has experienced great sorrow, and a spirit of sadness broods over such poems; for he is "an Orpheus fainting for Eurydice", as in "The Vision", a fine poem of longing and loneliness—almost of weariness of life:

"Spent is this wanderer, and you call him home."

This poem sounds with lovely verbal music, as also does "Thou Art My Long-lost Peace", on a similar theme and one of the loveliest in the book. This is the first stanza:

"Thou art my long-lost peace;
All trouble and all care,
Like winds on the ocean cease—
Leaving serene and fair
The evening-gilded wave
Above the unmeasured deep—
When those clear grave dark eyes
Call to the soul, in sleep . . ."

There are a number of other poems which fill me with joy—and humility—by their sheer beauty. Among these are "The Blind Boy", "The Visitant", "Joy" and "To a Candle"—a commonplace theme, a poet's meditation while holding a candle and looking on the sleeping form of one he loves. It is original and unusual in treatment and an exquisite poem:

Burn stilly, thou; and come with me.
I'll screen thy rays. Now . . . Look, and see,
Where, like a flower furled
Sealed from this busy world,
Tranquil brow, and lid, and lip,
One I love lies here asleep. . . .

Venture closer, then. Thy light
Be little day to this small night!
Fretting through her lids it makes
The lashes stir on those pure cheeks;
The scarcely-parted lips, it seems,
Pine, but in vain, to tell her dreams. . . .

See, she stirs. A hand at rest
Slips from above that gentle breast,
White as winter-mounded snows,
Summer-sweet as that wild rose . . .
Thou lovely thing! Ah, welladay!
Candle, I dream. Come, come away!"

No account of this book would be complete without mention of those poems which deal with the region of fantasy and dream. Of these, the most notable are "Two Gardens"; "An Island"; "Eureka", a rather forbidding dream of futurity; and "Outer Darkness", the poet's vision of a fantastic world beyond human life:

"Uncompanioned, forlorn, the shade of a shade,
From all semblance of life I seemed to have strayed
To a realm, and a being—of fantasy made . . .
I was lost: but aware.
I had traversed the stream
By that nebulous bridge which the waking call dream,
And was come to an ultimate future that yet
Was the dust of a past no remorse could forget . . .
Wheresoever my eyes might forebodingly range
They discerned the familiar disguised as the strange,—
Relics of memoried objects designed
To enchant to distraction an earth-enthralled mind,
A sense-shackled mind."

Then follows a description of this strange region, which concludes:

"Yet of beauty, past speech, was this region of Nought
And the reflex of images conjured by thought—
Those phantoms of flow'rs in their pitcher of glass
Shrined a light that no vision could ever surpass.
In that sinister dusk every leaf, twig and tree
Wove an intricate web of significancy . . ."

Such was the situation in which the poet, a "ghost of a ghost", found himself—"an existence denuded of all but an I".

"Till a whisper within, like a breath from the tomb,
Asked me, 'Knowest thou not wherefore thus thou art come
To this judgment, this doom?'
And my heart in my dreams stayed its pulsings: 'Nay, why?'
But nothingness made no reply."

This is an extraordinary poem, difficult but not obscure, for it takes shape, and unfolds and reveals its theme on close and careful reading—and re-reading.

Many other poems I admire very much, among these being "The Brook", a simple subject, beautifully treated, with fine technique and ending; "Not Yet", a tragedy of unrequited love packed into a few lines; and "But Oh, My Dear", with its happy ending:

"But oh, my dear, how rich and rare, and root-down-deep
and wild and sweet
It is to laugh!"

In addition, there are "Solitude", for its very effective atmosphere; "Sheep", which reveals the poet's power of conjuring up a scene and its attendant mood; "These Solemn Hills", a fine description of the coming on of night; "The Old Author", an ironic epigram:

" 'My last and longest book!' He frowned; then sighed:
And everything left unsaid!"

And "Treasure", for its unreasoning optimism:

"Reason as patiently as moth and rust
May fret life's ardours into dust;
But soon—the sun begins to shine, and then—
Undaunted weeds!—they up, they spring, they spread—
romp into bloom again."

In many of the poems in this book, the poet is trying to get to the reality which lies behind the apparent—as he says, in "Winter Company":

"As if the inmost secret of what they are
Lay open in what they seem."

As well as being the work of an original and inspired poet who deals with his themes in his own rare and individual manner, these poems also reveal the master-craftsman who takes a delight in the construction of a poem and knows how to make the most magical, most effective and noble use of words and ideas. In the variety and intricacy of verse forms employed there is always expert technique and cunning artistry in which beauty of sound and meaning are subtly blended. Here are the imaginative use of words, felicity of phrase, adaptation of rhythm to subject—as in "Swifts", and the employment of many fine and unusual similes, such as this, from "The Gnomon":

"I cast a shadow. Through the gradual day
Never at rest it secretly steals on;
As must the soul pursue its earthly way
And then to-night be gone."

This lovely book, rich in a solemn music, will surely enhance Mr. de la Mare's great reputation; yet the poet, writer of some of the most exquisite poems in the language, makes this contession in "The Burning-Glass":

"Yet not the loveliest song that ever
Died on the evening air
Could from my inmost heart dissever
What life had hidden there."

LAWRENCE W. HOCKEY.

Trouble No More the Echoes . . . .

TROUBLE no more the echoes; let them sleep.
Though once we heard strange music in this room,
Listen, with silent memories, to the sweep,
The scratch of withered leaves before the broom
Of tiny, secret winds about the floor.
No, do not light fresh tapers—let them fade.
Move softly, softly with me to the door
Through which, so long ago it seems, we strayed.
Here must we part in silence, as we met,
Only with soothing sadness, no sharp grief
For things unborn which we must soon forget—
How sweet in thought were they—in life how brief!
Though we re-fastened link for link the chain,
We would but call forth ghosts to love again.

Peter Roberts.

Our Lady of Swords

THEY have quenched Your candles and left You:
the blue of Your robe is fading,
pale as the valedictory incense about Your head
with its heavy halo.
The muttered prayers and the chanting are done,
and You are alone with Your flowers and Your gilded Dolours.
"*Ave Regina coeli!*" they hailed You—
the choristers' voices
soared, like an arc of light:
then, thrice and swiftly:
"*Ave . . . .gratia plena . . . .Mater Dei . . .*"
and You are alone now.
Do You remember sometimes, through the prayers and the
acclamations,
not the shaken Hill, the Nails and the bloody Tree,
nor even Gabriel's greeting—
not these, but the baby fingers,
the gurgled laughter, the play and the rosy sleep?
Do You remember these things, holding them precious
above the halo, the crown, the jewelled robe and the Swords?

Michael Delarche.

Poets and Pretenders

ONE of the minor mysteries of existence is the incurable propensity of so many persons to misjudge themselves, not in a moral or even an intellectual sense, but in the assessment of their real aptitudes. Few of us seem to know with precision what we are really adapted to do and take pride in something which is not the best, but merely the preferred, activity of our lives. A further, but less surprising, enigma is the willingness of other people sometimes to encourage this wrong-headedness by lending assistance to our hallucinations; less surprising, of course, because there is often some profit to be had thereby. Where poets are concerned, if the word is used in its proper and highest sense there can be no room for self-deception, for poetry rises from the well of truth; but there are large numbers of literary ladies and gents, endowed with considerable talent of various kinds, whose incurable illusion it is to believe themselves poets. The wish, no doubt, is father to the thought for undoubtedly the poet is the higher form of life, but this misconception is sufficiently common to cause considerable confusion in the mind of the reading public as to what is or is not poetry. Nor is this all. Those who should know better since they trade in words, either as user, publisher or seller, seem to have come to a tacit agreement to ignore the distinction, clear-cut though it is, between poetry and prose and the result is that almost anything may now be presented in a poetic guise, though this may consist only in an arbitrary truncation of lines, and the title of "Poem". We confess to a complete ignorance as to why this should be so, since it is quite pointless, but it persists and this REVIEW seems to be alone in the protest which is due, not necessarily on account of any deficiency in literary quality in such work, but because it masquerades as something which it is not.

The finest bright exemplar of this too-prevalent perversion to come into our hands recently is a so-called poem entitled *John Englishmen*, by W. G. Hole (Cambridge University Press, 6s.). On perusal this proved to be an undiluted prose, turgid in quality, whose division into verse-lines can have had no particular effect upon its acceptability as reading matter, but seems to have persuaded its author that his sentences might be of a length inordinate enough to collapse the chest of a deep-sea diver. No such belief (if Mr. Hole labours under it) is justified for one moment. Verse forms require not only a line-rhythm, but an over-all rhythm, which must be truer to the breathing pulses of humanity than prose has any need to be. But we are sure that if this book had been intended for presentation as a prose work its author would never have dared such long-winded feats of verbiage. It would be unfair perhaps after such strictures to avoid quotation. We will select one of the shorter of his periods and one which faithfully enough exposes the quality of the whole:

"For the Englishmen with regard to his Empire
the unprecedented claim can be made that although primarily

the conqueror or more or less rough-handed appropriator
of most of its component dominions, colonies, settlements,
he has realised and discharged responsibilities with regard to them
never before dreamt of by a suzerain,
and gradually shaped himself into
and come to be trusted by them all as a protector,
a helper, a sympathetic counsellor."

We chose this passage quite at random and not for its political naivety.

The next example (though one which offers interest, amusement and instruction) of this inability to distinguish poetry from prose is *Through the Dark Wood* by Polly Hill (Chatto and Windus, 3s. 6d.). It opens thus:

NURSE. Keep to the path
The way is narrow.
I have my instructions to tell you how to behave.
CHILD: What's in the wood?
NURSE. Bogies of all kinds.
Unkind people dressed as other sorts of people.
Animals with long toes.
I have told you often enough
Not to go into the wood—
At least those are my instructions
And I shall go on conveying them to you as best I may.

And does not vary in tone or tempo until its end on page 40. The blurb describes it as a "poem" and a "literary work" in the same sentence, placing thereby an ignorant finger on the very heresy which we have to thank for such hybrids as this. This fable, for such is its nature, gains much less than it loses by the manner of its presentation. We suppose it is of no moment that its publishers should call it a "poem" but it is certainly important that it should have been tricked out as one, for the staccato effect achieved is no addition to its charm as a "literary work".

Most of us have heard, dully enough, amid the fatigues and jostlings of private views and public exhibitions, the hard-worked phrase—a painter's picture—and have had the inevitable disappointment which must attend the inspection of any work so humbly inspired. Now we have a volume of "poet's poems" from the pen of Robert Graves called, simply, *Poems 1938-1945* (Cassell, 5s.), and the same disappointment. In the short foreword the author asserts that to write poems for other than poets is wasteful. Was there ever such nonsense! We are quite sure that the reverse is the truth and this volume will certainly confirm our view. For here is work of an easy competence and ripe talent, informed by a superior and cultivated mind, but singularly devoid of the one quality that of emotion, which alone could make it poetry. If this is what poets want, to write for them is a *far* greater waste. What is amiss with this book is the same thing as with the 'painter's picture'—it is a piece of brilliant technique wherein the beauty if present at all is secondary and

the effect simply that of things well done, as if for the sake of the conquest only, which other experts may recognise and appreciate. Yet since we are not dealing with a single painting, but with a book full of poems, it is inevitable that, from such a muse, there will be some things of a wider, indeed a universal, appeal. We will quote just one, and rail no more:

"She tells her love while half asleep,
In the dark hours,
With half-words whispered low:
As Earth stirs in her winter sleep
And puts out grass and flowers
Despite the snow,
Despite the falling snow."

Poetry can never be clever; the word is the rudest insult one may offer to any poet, whose work must not only appear simple but must in fact be so, no matter what agonies of effort may have gone to form not only his technique but, more fundamentally, his relation to life. We are becoming sensible of the superiority of simplicity over intricacy, elaboration, subtlety, or any other of the forms of human cleverness. In architecture we have discovered that Queen Anne is not dead, is indeed immortal by the mere magic of simplicity and in the realm of words we never really lost our faith. Beauty is, of course, an attribute of simplicity and truth a synonym for it, and one may ask then what more does one want for an immortal poem. The answer which all readers of this journal will expect is, emotion, and beyond that, of course, sincerity and that absolute intelligibility by which alone can we perceive clearly. Perception is the inevitable condition for reception without which we are merely frustrated, which reflection may serve suitably enough to introduce another sort of "poetry" which has been inveighed against often already in these pages. Such undeniably clever elaborations of subtlety as *Deaths and Entrances* by Dylan Thomas (Dent, 3s. 6d.) are not new to this darkened age and they do nothing to enlighten it. Their appeal is that of a new confusion to the already confounded and if there are enough readers whose minds are so habituated to the whirling muddle of modern existence that their poetry must be an omelette or nothing, then we suppose this to be just the sustenance for them. For our part these lucubrations without light, these esoteric and incoherent violences may serve, if they must, as one more of the stigmata of a mal-adjusted age but will certainly not receive our endorsement in any other way. And yet we do not disagree with the vigorously eulogistic recommendation of this volume to the public, made on the dust-cover. Mr. Thomas has indeed developed his own way, is vigorous and original, elemental, and with a difficult and authoritative idiom. But what, when this is said, does it all amount to? Let us give a sample from a piece called "When I Woke":

"When I woke, the town spoke.
Birds and clocks and cross bells

Dinned aside the coiling crowd,
The reptile profligates in a flame,
Spoilers and pokers of sleep,
The next-door sea dispelled
Frogs and satans and women-luck,
While a man outside with a billhook,
Up to his head in his blood,
Cutting the morning off,
The warm-veined double of Time
And his scarving beard from a book,
Slashed down the last snake as though
It were a wand or subtle bough,
Its tongue peeled in the wrap of a leaf."

The worst of this sort of pretentious nonsense is that we shall probably never know how good Mr. Dylan Thomas is or could be. He gives an obvious impression of power, both intellectual and emotional, but for all the real good it can do us or anyone, he might as well be dumb; and when he is less conscious of his authoritative originality, which happens sometimes, his work has a quality which is certainly not to be despised and a humbler originality which has some value.

It is much more than a relief to turn from these difficult and turbid mental exercises to the joyous limpidity of a book which reflects without any self-consciousness whatever, a mind equally vigorous, more original and certainly brighter than any which could be content with incoherence. *New Bats in Old Belfries* by John Betjeman (Murray, 6s.) is certainly light verse in the sense of that word which suggests brilliance of wit and observation, an airy deftness and a complete absence of that heaviness of mediocre creation which distinguishes so much modern work. It is light, but not slight, with depth beneath the smile, depths in which we are not required darkly to wallow but at which we may thrill deliciously with automatic awareness at the turn of a phrase or a mere word. Light verse of this sort is as appropriate to Parnassus as the noblest sonorities of tragedy and, judging from the rarity of the first-rate, as difficult to write. And to call it verse is often to mis-call it, for it can be as moving as only poetry can; and the emotion evoked is not always the risible. But to return to Mr. Betjeman, the first thing that must strike any reviewer is the spontaneity and irrepressible individuality of every word he has written here. He seems not even to choose his words, using a bit of light-hearted slang at times as unconsciously as a schoolboy might. So one gets an impression, beyond price, that the world is a good place after all, sad at times but with plenty to laugh at, and that mere solemnity or pretension are just not worth notice. There is so much of this volume that we are tempted to quote that we are nearly certain to choose wrong and the paper shortage is an ever-present deterrent to copiousness. But this extract from "Margate" has a flavour which we think typical enough for selection. The poem is a nostalgic war-time piece and we have space

only for its concluding stanzas:

"How lightly municipal, meltingly tarr'd
Were the walks through the Lawns by the Queen's Promenade
As soft over Cliftonville languished the light
Down Harold Road, Norfolk Road into the night.

Oh! then what a pleasure to see the ground floor
With tables for two laid as tables for four,
And bottles of sauce and Kia-Ora and squash
Awaiting their owners who'd gone up to wash.

From third floor and fourth floor the children looked down
Upon ribbons of light in the salt-scented town;
And more loud than the trams was the roar of the sea
As it washed in the shingle the scraps of their tea.

Beside the Queen's Highcliffe now rank grows the vetch,
Now dark is the terrace, a storm-battered stretch;
And I think, as the fairy-lit sights I recall,
It is these we are fighting for, foremost of all."

It would be pleasant if we could always find warranty to praise simple, unassuming work but, as we said just now, to simplicity, sincerity and intelligibility must be added an element of emotion before a poem can be born. Perhaps we should define emotion, at all events to Miss Myfanwy Haycock, who sends us *More Poems* (Western Mail, 2s. 6d.) asking for our opinion. A previous volume of this wholly sincere and intelligent lady was noticed by us some time ago in terms which were encouraging, and not unkindly towards such quality as was then displayed. We used the word superficial then, and we are not sure, even while we note with satisfaction an increasing awareness of depth in her work, that it would be entirely unjust now. For it would appear that the emotions enlisted in Miss Haycock's poems are still only those natural gentle responses of human feeling which are the commonplaces of life. We can but believe on the strength of the concluding poem of this book entitled "To a Critic", that she misunderstood our previous criticism, even if the quality of these most excellently finished new verses did not sufficiently evince the fact. It was not with the themes which Miss Haycock chooses that we had any quarrel; and had she chosen this time to write of torture, ruin and rape (to select some of her own playful list) she might, we fear, have been just as superficial. It was with her treatment of her subjects that we expressed dissatisfaction, and while we prefer those which she so evidently adores we are a little weary of seeing so little of the Authoress herself woven into them. The emotional reactions which her themes produce in her appear to be too easily sublimated and seem never to evoke in her those profounder reveries in which occur those deeper divinations of the human spirit. We had hoped that Miss Haycock would understand that her simplicity and eloquent sincerity were not enough

whereas what she might have added to them by a completer absorption in them might have been not only new but quite possibly worth while. Nature anyhow is definitely not a theme for poetry if one is content merely to describe its outward semblance but may be most beautifully used to illustrate and illume our own dual nature and its mystic yearnings, inspiring us to more or less profound speech with its inarticulate but magical wisdom.

But this sober attitude to the world we live in comes to most of us with the years. Nobody will wish to quarrel with the unsuspecting harmonies of youth and yet it is some relief to turn to something richer in awareness of the deeper relationships and significances of life and nature, such as *One Hour Together* by E. Godfrey Hoare (Muller 7s. 6d.), even though there is much less music and certainly no defter technical accomplishment in it. This is a volume of poems for which its publishers claim a wise finality in the knotting of the emotional strands of the last twenty-five years. If this meant what we think it does, it is a claim to more profundity than is justified, for while there is a good deal of philosophising in these poems it is of a somewhat casual sort and gives more the impression of the lighter kind of musing by a thoughtful and spiritually observant man. There is, of course, nothing wrong with that nor, decidedly, with that sort of poem, but there is, of necessity, more the air of a personal record made for a private satisfaction than that of a magnum opus. Such things have value for both writer and reader, and the sober view of what poetry should be which the author shows in his own approach to his work is a very proper one.

The difficulty of combining art with inspiration, intellect with emotion (which is one more tentative definition of poetry) is what condemns most of us to mere versification. It was therefore a real event to encounter *Fire and Ice*, by T. W. Ramsey (English Universities Press, 4s. 6d.) for therein is well demonstrated how mind may be subdued to the spirit and art be seduced from its mental allegiance to become the servant of emotion. Mr. Ramsey has been called an intellectual poet, and as a superficial observation the phrase is well enough if one remembers to stress the operative word, poet. For here is nothing purely cerebral, in fact nothing self-conscious at all. The explanation both for the rather misleading phrase and for the unusual quality of Mr. Ramsey's work is, we think, in the fact that the key to his emotions lies in his mind, in intellectual concepts, and that he can be as surely inspired by those austerer impulses as a poet needs. The form and pattern of the universe and its exquisite balance and order have always fascinated him and from them he has learned that oracular note, intensified by his almost disdainful economy of diction, which gives his work a dignity and significance beyond the reach of mere ornament.

These attributes, observed already in three former volumes, are still more confidently marked in this latest book. So also is that richness of imaginative simile and illustration which seems to bring all things into

correspondence with his theme. Wherever Mr. Ramsey's poems begin, whether in his heart or his head, his fancy ranges free enough and if there is at times some tinge of his intellectual preoccupations in his themes and even in their treatment, there is no question of the authenticity of his work as poetry. It is inevitable that the major poem, that which gives the book its name, should be some such spiritual excursus into the physical. The rich field for a roving intellectual fancy provided by these two violently contrasting physical phenomena should indeed prove irresistible to a mind which so well combines emotional fire with intellectual ice. Here is a passage from it (it is much too long in its entirety) which we think is typical of Mr. Ramsey's work. "Fire" is declaiming—

"The great volcanoes of the moon
That scar her lacerated face
Flamed with my beauty once, but soon
Were tired and spent; and in her race

Against the hurrying winters now
Her mutability is shown
In silver lustre loaned for show,
And changing of a borrowed gown.

So true it is that fire will change
His garment but his nature never—
The cold that locks her loftiest range
Of peaks in glassy death for ever

Is vivid still with various lights
That hourly kindle spire on spire
As one by one the frozen heights
Step forth to meet the eastern fire."

The volume also contains twenty-two sonnets and in these the author exhibits a real mastery of that difficult form. It is not easy to combine so much virtuosity with genuine emotional fire, a thing which may account for the sonnet's present eclipse in the favour of our "Moderns". But without italics, Mr. Ramsey is modern enough and yet can present us with a real problem in selecting a single sonnet from among his many for quotation. But we were perhaps most pleased with No. 4, called "As Dreams Are Made On":

"O Love remain not here—thou art no guest
For winter nights, for days made blind with mist;
Autumn has plucked her vintage now and pressed
The red wine in the cup of amethyst:
And many scarlet poppies that once bound
In drowsy somnolence the heat of June
Have bowed their heads in slumber to the ground,
And the steel plough will give them burial soon.

But from that burying be thou absented.
When the long furrows scar the living clay,
Thy splendour never yet with death consented
To bury beauty from the light of day;
And though the cup be void of all but pain,
Though poppies perish—let their dreams remain."

Such things speak for themselves and leave us wondering once again at that miracle of compression which can paint, beautifully, so many pictures on so small a canvas and yet combine them all in one moving exclamation of love.

Not the least signicant recent sign of a general and continuing interest in poetry is the publication of books about poets. The dissection of poetic character and temperament, if effected by the printing of letters as numerous and self-revealing as those of Rainer Maria Rilke, now selected from a correspondence extending between the years 1902-1926, and translated by R. F. C. Hull (Macmillan, 21s.), may indeed be of great value to the embryo poet and will assuredly be of considerable interest to the poetry lover. It is certain that Rilke's poetry has exercised, and still exerts, a powerful influence upon contemporary work and perhaps has been taken too often as good warranty for modern unintelligibility. It is only human not to enquire too closely into the underlying deeper reasons which may exist for anything, if the thing itself attracts. The character of this gently provocative German poet, however and somehow, makes his frequent incoherences a more natural mode of expression to him than clarity itself and thus escapes our otherwise equally natural resentment. When Rilke is objective he is pellucidly clear, his clouded periods arising only from that introverted quality of mind, which was not only a natal heritage but was intensified by life-long habit. The modern perpetrator of incoherency however never seems so objective as when he is unintelligible. Were this not so we could confidently predict for him the same end as Rilke's in that same gentle twilight of insanity which, for Rilke, must have been only a completer and more peaceful withdrawal from a world to which he was so ill-adjusted.

From such considerations it is a far cry indeed to *Interplay*, by Alfred H. Body (University of London Press, 2s.). Much of this little volume is mere eloquence, easy and pleasant to read, but neither more nor less than a poetically worded prose. We do not denigrate such work in refusing it a place in the realm of poetry. It simply does not conform, save in outward pattern, to the essential prosodic necessities of poetry and thus must be content to be excellent in another and less elevated sphere. For poetry is a matter not only of content but of forms and rhythms, not only a thing of emotion but of a special verbal art. The greatest poetry is that which in the highest measure combines the two, for both have the quality of working with and by each other, as two reactive chemicals might, to produce a noble synthesis.

But not all Mr. Body's work disdains the beneficent bonds of classical prosody, and when he consents to be bound he reveals a comfortable enough posture. But in the deeper implications of poetry he has still something to learn, perhaps from Rilke, but certainly from the development of his own emotional powers. Poetry is not something which can be created by thought—a heresy too widely held and perhaps shared by Mr. Body. Its relationship to literature, that intellectual expertness with words, is as exiguous, indeed, as that of a house-painter with a Leonardo da Vinci. It is not true, as a critic avers this week in one of our contemporaries, that anyone with a literary sense can see what is or is not poetry, if the accent is on the literary sense; and yet, as we have remarked in these pages before, the literary approach is all too common in the search for and the attempted creation of poetry. The result is objectivity and self-consciousness of expression and at the best a cerebral quality which makes such work as ephemeral as the brain which conceived it.

Theseus and the Minotaur, by Patric Dickinson (Cape, 5s.) contains a number of items in addition to the title poem which some of our readers may remember was broadcast by the B.B.C. The dramatic quality of this poem is, however, less our business than its poetic, and it is, no doubt, inevitable that the latter should have been subordinated to the necessities of the former. The need for dialogue and for action must result in frequent descents from Parnassus into a work-a-day world and we should be unjust to complain. Nevertheless we are tempted to enquire whether this sort of mingling of arts does not risk a fall between two stools. Nobody would deny that it has been done without that twofold tumble but we do not think Mr. Dickinson has altogether avoided it.

His poems, however, of which there are many in the book, are quite another matter. The quality which impressed us most in them was their vigour, not only a vigour of expression but of imagination. His poems march easily and well, with no load of unnecessary ornament, in simple rhythms and upon economical feet, and they are undeniably interesting if rather philosophically inclined and without much emotional power; but there is always that fresh vigour by virtue of which he gets on with the job and makes every step exhilarating. Take the first verse of "Delight of Living", a philosophical reverie, and say whether such an introduction would not persuade you to read the rest:

"As in my soothing bath I lay
The soft and comfortable day
Retired before the snow;
And crying like a frightened bird
Upon the evening train I heard
Civilization go."

But perhaps Mr. Dickinson shows a rare quality of self-criticism when he writes: "I am no poet who can set
This beauty like a butterfly

Upon a jewelled board of rhyme;
For when I raise love's clumsy net
I startle wings into the sky
Up steps of air I cannot climb."

If so we would observe that if the above sentiment is sincere there will not long be any inability to climb, or even to soar, for one so obviously gifted with every poetic technical accomplishment and so sensitively alive not only to life but to that beauty which in so humbly renouncing, he comes so near to capturing.

Another interesting book is a collection of *Poems* by Jonathan Wilson (Cape, 3s. 6d.) with a foreword by G. M. Young. The author was killed at Venloo at the age of 21 and much of the work printed therein was found in school manuscript books mixed up with accounts of football matches and other matters of interest to him. His only previous publications were in the Marlborough College Press in 1943, and there is, no doubt, some immaturity observable, though certainly none in the deeper sense. Indeed, his power of writing from the heart gave him even so early, that completeness which is the prerogative of the spirit. It is to the intellect that maturity comes slowly and by painful experience but the immortal part of man knows nought of time. Let us quote a most simple yet most sincerely moving poem—a farewell to a friend. In it the agelessness and the immaturity are both apparent:

"Come, let us say goodbye and go;
Let us not stand with sorrow in our hearts
And false words of joy offending our lips,
What I have to say you already know.

You know I cannot repeat it again
Here with everyone around us.
My eyes will speak for me perhaps
I will try to make my meaning plain.

But how can I say it in words?
How can I formulate phrases that mean
What I mean to say? Nothing will come.
Forgive my silence and listen to the birds.

They sing in joy—they live without care.
That was what you brought to me,
Life without care—but listen to the owl,
His lonely sorrow invades the night air.

But come, let me say good-bye and go:
Let us not wait with sorrow in our hearts.
With you my daylight fades,
But I shall remember in the dark of to-morrow."

Too soon, indeed, did the daylight fade for him, but in the poignant simplicity of this poem is a fitting reminder of things that are beyond daylight and dark, even beyond death itself.

Much lighter in vein is *The Sand Castle*, by C. C. Abbott (Lane, 3s. 6d.), with a mature and somewhat dilettante lightness of idle, affectionate strumming, which is well enough but not to be taken with any high seriousness. Criticism of such work must inevitably confine itself, in the main, to technical considerations, and here is no sign of weakness or forcing of the note. The air remains indeed impeccably graceful, cadenced with polished ease; and each piece ends with a nice smoothness and where it should. It goes without saying that such sweets cloy with too copious an indulgence in them; and yet Mr. Abbott can be original and, here and there, are to be found pieces of a more weighty sort; but even these are rather unconcerned with emotional implications and the need to arouse a response deeper then the titillation of a reader's ear. One of the best of these is "Tulips":

"Coarse and shameless
Are these red tulips
That fling open their bosoms
And sag on their stalks
Like blowsy women
Blown hot at the fair.
Loud voiced and froward
These malkins that yesterday
Shuttered and virginal,
Carried their necks like swans;
Cool, spare."

From Allen and Unwin (7s. 6d.) comes another of those commemorative volumes of poetry, published posthumously in a limited edition, to form in some sort a memorial for those who loved the author. Maitland Radford was a Doctor of Medicine and during some thirty busy years found time to write some twenty-eight poems which are now published almost as an addendum to the prefaces and forewords of his friends. Indeed the book is about equally divided between these prose appreciations and the poems but since it was not meant for an indifferent public the arrangement is no doubt excellent.

It is doubtless true, as the introduction says, that the poems represent and recall the author vividly to those who knew him, but we fear that to those that knew him not they offer little save a certain charm of humanity, of mental breadth and understanding. It is, alas, not our business to judge, or even greatly regard, these things in these columns, but to confine our faculties to an evaluation of another sort. The poems are just what one might expect from such a man, whose serious attention was given to quite other things than the making of verse. But we can applaud the affection which has conceived so sincere an epitaph.

The enterprise of publishing books of verse from the United States of America and Canada which have already been issued by transatlantic university presses seems to us to be well-founded, and the latest to reach us from Geoffrey Cumberlege, *Perilous Balance*, by Arnold Stein (Oxford

University Press, 9s. 6d.) confirms that view. No doubt American bookshelves are as cluttered as our own with the same perennial flood of poetic pretentiousness, but we do not recollect, off-hand, a single re-publication of the present sort which evinced anything approaching the all too common uncritical optimism of many original publications here. Perhaps it is an advantage to see and judge poetry in book form, although for our part we believe print to confer a fictitious quality on poor work which would make judgment more difficult. However this may be, we welcome *Perilous Balance*, first published by University of Minnesota Press, for its poems have that genuine undertone of things felt rather than thought, which gives them so effortlessly that special quality which is poetry. How impossible a feat to conjure up by means of whatever studious thought such a picture as this, of a falling airman, taken from "Death of a Hero":

> "He had fallen clear and the wind was pouring past
> Him, a little passive solid hurtling
> Through a vast envelopment of night. He saw
> The face of his wife go by, too fast for the mind
> To hold—again and again, and he reached out
> Blindly. And there was a corner, motionless,
> And he was a little boy and turning the corner
> And there was the florist shop and—just beyond—
> His home. And he was walking up the steps
> And his hand was on the door and it was opening
> And he was calm and safe—Oh, why had he left?"

Simple like everything which rides upwards upon an emotional wave from the unconscious, and with a power of conviction denied to the fruits of the mind, such things as this, and here there is no lack of them, bear the inevitable stamp of truth whereby we too fall with the doomed aviator and feel his every emotion. This is the authentic touch and it matters but little that Mr. Stein has chosen the emancipation of free verse for his epical story; but not always does he eschew the ancient models as here in a poem to his sister:

> "Not thee alone: the bond between us needs
> No strengthening by word or gift. It is
> A thing of love, earthy and sure, and yet
> Mysterious.
>
> I shall be there within a phrase of music,
> A line of verse, an eager leap of rhythm;
> And you will see me in a colour.
>
> Something about the wind, the scent it carries
> The way it pulls your hair, its far-off voice,
> Mocking, aloof, and yet not so, not so.

Whatever warms your blood in thoughtless love
Towards fellow creature sharing in the tears
And laughter of this brave hopeless adventure:
I shall be there with you, a part of you,
And of the beauty of the world and man."

Almost you may perceive the heart prompting the head in these beautiful lines, for the thought in them follows no law of cerebration but is dictated by the unconscious relevancy of sincere emotion.

When one comes across evidence of a pre-occupation with small technical things in a book of poems, there is not seldom also a lack of emotional value in the work presented. Experimenters with forms seem apt to be more interested in them than in what they ought to enshrine, their verses remaining upon a mental plane and shining only with the brilliance of technique. The pre-occupation of Margaret Crosland in *Strange Tempe* (Fortune, 5s.) is, it is true, a minor one, consisting only in a refusal to begin the line with a capital unless the prose rule regarding full stops or question marks happens to apply. This modernism can, no doubt, be defended on the ground of its effect upon clarity—its assistance to punctuation—but it remains an innovation nevertheless, and an irrelevance of technique which is no business of the poet. His task is a hard one, in which few succeed, for Parnassus may not be assaulted by any mortal arts—by those organic impulses of thought or contrivance upon which we humans so confidently, but unwisely, base ourselves. Poetry can be achieved only by those whose spiritual essence is serenely preponderant over the physical and whose emotional perceptions dictate their thinking. In short, poetry is a matter of character, not of intellect, and we use the word in the sense, not of virtue or its reverse, but to describe that agglomeration of spiritual qualities or defects which has nothing to do with the brilliance or otherwise of our brains.

But we are in danger of forgetting *Strange Tempe* in the length of our digression and, maybe, incurring the risk of injustice by inference to Margaret Crosland. Her poems are a mixture of ancient and modern in a technical sense. She writes sonnets, though seldom with the established rhyme schemes, and often with a very modern disdain of line cadence or over-all rhythm. The appalling nature of such a line as "of the Hollow Men wounding more than we can" apparently escapes her, and she is content to finish it with a single word which begins (and wrecks) the next line. It is perhaps inevitable that with such a foundation nothing much is achieved of that combination of beauty, truth and simplicity which men regard as poetry.

This trinity is closely pursued, however, by L. Aaronson in *The Homeward Journey* (Christophers, 5s.). The note of unconscious sincerity in his poems is apparent at once, and he is clearly not concerned with anything at all but the saying of what his heart is full of. He does not exhibit a greater virtuosity or mental accomplishment than is common to most

writers of verse and there is nothing in his words that is unusual or strange. His secret does not lie even in their arrangement, that were to confuse cause and effect, but in the spiritual dominance of the mood which possesses him when he writes. But he, too, leaves some redolence of midnight oil upon the air in an occasional passage where thought has made a difficulty of comprehension, and where the keener perceptions of the heart would have made all plain. One of his best, and simplest, things is the following poignant and apparently unrehearsed little poem which he calls "The Desolate Return":

"I came to the door of my home and knocked.
Nobody answered: the door was locked.
No children were playing: the street was bare.
Summer's dust lay on the air.
I knocked again: I had no key.
No one came out to welcome me.
Mother and Father I forgave:
It is hard to open a door in the grave;
But the child I was who did not come,
He broke my heart and my heart for home."

Such poems demonstrate once more how unnecessary it is for the poet to try to say all, leaving nothing to be contributed by the reader. Indeed the power of evocation is among the most potent of poetic weapons and that power dwells most obviously in sincerity and simplicity.

Cobwebs in Dreamland, by W. H. Hornibrook (Pendulum, 1s. 6d.) were, we fear, spun in a much more mundane realm than that of fantasy. Competent versification about many things gives evidence that the author has a sound literary gift which is pleasant enough to exercise, no doubt, but is not particularly rewarding to the reader. The same words might be said of *Whose Victory*, by Ronald S. Mallone (Christian Party, 2s. 6d.) except that the literary gift does not so plainly appear. The verses, however, show the same reliance upon mere words for their appeal, rather than upon that evocative simplicity of genuine feeling which alone can capture a reader; although Mr. Mallone affects a more modern and less appealing style. Here is a short sample of his technique:

"Planes shot down; machines missing.
Note them down amateur scorers
Sitting in armchair comfort by your radio,
Then talk of necessary sacrifices,
Relax, and so to bed."

It is a matter for satisfaction that a new volume by Brian Hill, an occasional contributor to this journal, should exhibit a real advance upon its predecessor, reviewed in our September/October number of last year. It is called *Take all Colours* (Favil, 3s. 6d.) and is sufficiently slender to earn but tentatively the description of book, but quality not quantity

is the thing of importance, and in this respect the new collection is quite worthy of the word. For there is not only more depth, both of humour and observation, but distinctly more feeling in his atmosphere. Nevertheless these new poems are still light in vein—the gain is only in sensitivity though that is much, since what before was merely graceful is now gracious. One of the best of them is, we think, "Saturday Afternoon", and we will quote a part of it for its tender sincerity of touch:

"He sits there so still
On the hard bench;
Hands, gnarled roots, rest
On knees;
Eyes, muddy water, stare,
Blink
(a ripple passes over the muddy water),
And stare.
I do not think he sees
The cricket match,
Nor ever hears
The dry click of the bat.
I do not think he dreams
Of his own youth.
Yet he is there every Saturday;
He never misses one
The children play "touch"
Round his feet;
His eyes do not follow them;
Two white butterflies drift
Past his face;
His eyes do not follow them.
I think he just drinks the sun,
Like a plant, into his old body.
Until a faintness within him
Warns him: it is time
To go home."

The author is perhaps too light-hearted, if such a thing be possible or indeed anything but desirable; but for the poet life should seem earnest even if it cannot appear quite real. To be gracious upon the lighter aspects of life is, of course, good but we return to our view, previously expressed, that Mr. Hill can be a better poet if and when he becomes more aware of the depths which yawn, not altogether unseen now, beneath us. Let us quote Bertrand Russell: "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark".

Middle East Musings, by E. C. Higham, privately printed at 2s., adds little to our catalogue. Verses conceived, at odd times, in a leisure spending mood, remain inevitably in their own unimportant place. For poetry, which this journal exists to foster, is as alien to that atmosphere of careless ease as light from dark and is and will remain a rare flower of the spirit which blossoms only at the bidding of a tireless spiritual husbandry. Which brings us suitably enough to our final booklet called *Venture in Verse*, by Charles and Allene Peck. This also is privately printed and is priced at 1s., and while giving much the same impression of leisurely cerebration yet provides faint intimations of a truer perspective. This is more noticeable in the poems of Miss Peck than in those of her brother and is the product of that gentler approach which perhaps is more natural to her sex, but certainly not its prerogative.

A Rich Bunch of Red Roses

Red Roses for Me, by Sean O'Casey (Macmillan, 6s.).
The Old Man of the Mountains, by Norman Nicholson (Faber, 6s.).
This Way to the Tomb, by Ronald Duncan (Faber, 6s.).
The Assassin, by Peter Yates (Chatto & Windus, 6s.).
The House of the Octopus, by Charles Williams (Edinburgh House, 5s.).

FOLLOWING the recent Poetic Drama competition it is appropriate to consider briefly some of the newly published plays of this genre, and in the six which are noted here we believe there are at least three important works.

Red Roses for Me, although published in 1942, comes into the picture to-day by virtue of its first production on the London stage and also because we wish to point out this star of the first magnitude in the universe of poetry and life. We do not believe that Ireland must inevitably be the source of the loveliest flowerings of poetic drama but how fortunate are the writers who have this chromatic wealth to draw upon.

Red Roses for Me does not show Mr. O'Casey at his direst, and Mr. Agate complains that the soil out of which his former glory grew, has here been over-refined and the flowers bedded out, thereby producing an unrealist poet's play. Well, it is certainly a poet's play and one to be read and seen by those with the flame of poetry in them, for this is a world where a man may say to his mother: "When it was dark you always carried the sun in your hand for me", and to his sweetheart: "You couldn't set aside the joy that makes the moon a golden berry in a hidden tree"; where the weary flower-sellers and apple-women can sleepily declaim on Dublin in the dreaming lilt of: "A gold-speckled candle, white as snow, was Dublin once; yellowish now, leaning' sideways, an' guttherin' down to a last shaky glimmer in th' wind o' life . . . . Half-mournin' skies for ever over us, frownin' out any chance of merriment that came staggerin' to us for a little support . . . . cakes tuppence on'y, baked over scented turf as th's dawn stepped over th' blue-gowned backs o' th' Dublin Mountains. . . . Away, an' leave us to saunter in sleep, an' crave out a crust in the grey kingdom of quietness".

What a scene and what a corrective for those who feel the weight of power politics and world upheaval pressing down too hardly upon them. This is a play of the golden heart and when the final curtain falls—for those so fortunate to see it acted—instead of the customary prattle and prosaic intent of those leaving the theatre there must surely be the hush of evening and the measure of a dreaming glory in their hearts with bright song burnishing the darkening way of the streets:

> A sober, black shawl hides her body entirely,
> Touch'd be th' sun an' th' salt spray of th' sea;
> But deep in th' darkness a slim hand, so lovely,
> Carries a rich bunch of red roses for me!

The Old Man of the Mountains is based on the story of Elijah and Ahab transferred in time to the present day and in scene from Samaria to Cumberland. This is a rustic play native to the northern soil, with the sounds of the becks and the brogue and rough-hewn elemental life of the fells blowing through its pages. The language is good simple English prose which rolls vigorously, cleanly and satisfyingly along. It is, unless we are being unduly optimistic, ideally a play for village dramatic groups, and we can think of no better setting for it than the barns and greens of our English hamlets. And here it is particularly interesting to note the experience of one reviewer who, on being present at a performance of the play at the Mercury Theatre, had sitting near him a row of very young boys. They were, he says, absorbed in the play from start to finish—more absorbed than he had ever seen any children at any play or film. This is a significant and un-English reaction, and one must not overlook the possibility that they were a party of un-English boys but, on the face of it, it seems a pointer to the possibilities of production of this play on the village greens and in village barns.

The dramatic experiment in transferring the Old Testament characters and plot to the present day is an interesting one and even if he runs into difficulties in his attempt to sustain the analogy in the third act, Mr. Nicholson has, on the whole, done it imaginatively and successfully.

We cannot let this volume pass through our hands without referring to the fine quality of the production. We have, in the past, been critical of some of Messrs. Faber's war-time productions, but on feeling the texture of the paper used in this book, observing the perfection of the cover and lettering on the spine, we can say wholeheartedly, all is forgiven.

This Way to the Tomb is the second play produced in the Mercury series, and judging from the length of its run, it is, for a poetic play, achieving an almost phenomenal success. Described as a masque and anti-masque, it deals in its first half with the story of Antony of Santa Ferrata in the 14th century and his fasting, self-mortification and soul-searching until in the end he reached the conclusion that desire for no desire is a desire also. At which stage one irreverently inclined to put the query—so what? In the second half, the anti-masque, the locale is the same but the time the present. And here the fun furiously commences with percussion band, television, radio announcer and "an actuality relay from the sanctified studio reserved for televising spiritual services and religious experiences". Then follows the visit of the Astral Group in search of Faith and religious experiences, to the tomb of the now sainted Antony. The author has here let himself go and obviously enjoyed the writing of every line of it but we doubt whether the reader will appreciate these frolics in print to the same extent as those who can see and hear them on the Mercury stage. We know of no play comparable to *This Way to the Tomb* with its startling combination of poetry and farce, and it is certainly a brilliant piece of imaginative writing. However one may

regard the mystical experiences and conclusions of Antony they are put forward in a beauty of word and phrase which shines through the pages with a remarkable consistency:

Dear Christ, how fear's hurricane threashes my heart hollow
And winnows my faith till it is lost with the waste
The grain swept away with the straws of doubt.
. . . . . .
How still the valley
this is the dead end of the year,
And the cut back vines
show no signs
of life, leaf;
Even the olives have felt the grief
of the cold Mistral.
The pruned trunks stand ugly
sometimes they appear
To shake as a fist; Thine
Hand Divine?
Raised in wrath?
Then held for a brief
moment which was merciful.

This last, based on Cavalcanti's Canzone, is a rare and complex metric pattern which is widely followed throughout the play. There are also several charming lyrics. Here is one which deserves, and will doubtless receive, a wider fame:

Morning is only
A heron rising
With great wings lifting
day into the sky.

Morning is only
A scarlet stallion
Jumping the ocean.
Its mane aflame on the sea.

Morning is only
The white plumes of smoke
As the velvet snake
Night leaves the green valley.

Morning is only
Women bent at the well
Lifting their pails full
Of their hearts, too heavy.

These, then, are three poets' plays which have not only been published but have remarkably been produced in recent months in London. Not

at Drury Lane, it is true, but the fact of production alone is significant. Our recommendation is, see them all; read them all.

The Assassin in the story of Abraham Lincoln skilfully related and constructed around the person of his assassin, John Wilkes Booth, the histrionic Southern patriot. It is a sympathetic portrait of Booth, revealing his magnetism, fiery faith and ideals. Opening with the news of Lee's surrender, the play shows Booth in exalted mood inspiring his confederates, many of whom are now falling away, and planning Lincoln's death:

> All Washington is drunk to-night.
> It's something warmer than cheap alcohol
> Exalts me now. I've found myself!

The deed is carried out—"I struck and felt the whole North shudder like a tree"—and then follows Booth's flight to the South, his capture, and defiant and courageous end. There is no lack of action in this play, which is soundly constructed on orthodox dramatic principles thus:

> But we have seen two living men collide,
> And meet at last in death's equality.
> Each was obsessed by human liberty,
> And each pursued his private fantasy
> Down labyrinths of passion and despair;
> But only one sprawls over history,
> Exaggerating by his destiny
> The upward struggle of the animal
> Through suffering to human dignity.

It is written in that mixture of poetry and prose which is so often used in plays of this type, the theory being that the poetry rises to the surface when the speech and emotions require it. Thereupon the text acquires the dignity of iambic pentameters—or what you will. But it is an indeterminate arrangement and in this particular work there seems, for instance, no sound reason for Colonel Conger's speaking in prose one moment and, according to the lay-out of the text, in poetry the next. We are quite sure that the Col. Conger in this play never spoke a word of poetry in his life nor would he thank anyone for suggesting that he had. We should like to see this play produced but the six different settings required, unless they are simplified or symbolized, provide a formidable obstacle.

The House of the Octopus is a verse-play written at the request of the United Council for Missionary Education and, as might be expected, has rather a synthetic flavour about it. It deals with the taking over of some islands, presumably in the South Seas, by an all-powerful and aggressive State and the soul-searching spiritual conflict of the Christian missionary who sees the loss of his personal empire over his flock. It is a work which has been conceived and written with all diligence, but we are afraid it does not rise to any great heights whether of poetry or drama.

* * * *

This "Poetry London" issue of *The Dragon of Tingalam*, by Herbert

Palmer, a fairy story in the Alician manner, is perhaps scarcely suitable for review in this journal in spite of its authorship and the auspices under which it has been launched upon the world, but it is one of those books in which poetry is implicit, for all its disguise of prose dialogue and its form of a five-act play for children. In his claim that it is addressed not only to them but to adults, Mr. Palmer does not err, for its breezy nonsensical rationalism would have been entertaining for the grown-ups even if it had not been spiced with a mature wit which yet should hold its quantum of fun for the young. The story is compounded of the usual mixture of kings and queens, princesses, fairies, knights and, of course, the dragon, and its denouement, the happy and predestined marriage, is entirely within the usual tradition; and in this there is a well-tried and proven wisdom. Where the author has scored, and brilliantly, is in his fresh and lively treatment of his traditional material. His fairy queen can exclaim "You mustn't talk cheap philosophy to a fairy", and the princess, in despatching her lover into the woods to seek and slay the dragon, advises him to take his lunch and make a day of it. Lewis Carroll has shown us unforgettably that combination of the matter of fact and the marvellous which exhibits all the delicious absurdity of the rational when carried to extremes, and Mr. Palmer has followed much the same road but with his own atmosphere and in his own twists and turnings and has discovered to us a land of enchantment in which no man has set foot before.

The Winner of the Stalin Prize for Poetry

(*Special to the* POETRY REVIEW)

ALEXANDER Tvardovsky, recently awarded the Stalin Prize for works published in 1943-1944, belongs to the generation of Soviet poets who came to the fore in the 'thirties. Son of a peasant of the Smolensk region, Alexander Tvardovsky in his early boyhood loved to listen to folksongs and legends and to tunes of the shepherd's horn for which the Smolensk region is famous. As a schoolboy he began writing songs himself and played them on the horn. The village schoolmaster thought one particularly good and told the boy to send the verses to a Smolensk newspaper, which printed them.

After leaving the village school and then high school Tvardovsky majored in philology at the Moscow University. A distinguished linguist with a flawless feeling for language, Tvardovsky may well have become an outstanding scholar but he was determined to devote himself to poetry. And in his verse he became an exponent of the thoughts and emotions of the new Soviet village.

Through this medium Tvardovsky unfolded a new world. His poetry preserves the song-lore quality typical of the old Russian rustic poetry. It deals with the ordinary, everyday life of the village. Scenes of village

labour, love, village parties and village weddings complete with accordion, songs and gaiety were the subjects of Tvardovsky's early poems.

Tvardovsky created a whole gallery of portraits of the new Soviet village people, of people who are masters of their own fate.

In 1936 Tvardovsky published his poem "The Land of Muravia", which won him countrywide fame. "The Land of Muravia" is the fantastic dreamland of the Russian peasant, and for centuries a land of justice where labour is valued above all things, where there are no masters and no slaves but only free workers, where people are not afraid of hunger, old-age or loneliness; where prosperity, leisure and love are the rewards of toil. For how many centuries did the peasant dream of this land! The Smolensk Muzhik, hero of Tvardovsky's poem, decides to make a pilgrimage to this imaginary land and goes out in search of it. He finds it finally in the new Soviet village. A clever combination of phantasy with reality of life in a Soviet village lends great charm to the poem.

During the war Tvardovsky wrote another poem, "Vassili Terkin", and this won him the Stalin Award.

Vassili Terkin, hero of Tvardovsky's poem, is a tough, seasoned soldier who likes a good joke. In him is portrayed the characteristics of the Russian man and soldier. He is modest but unflinchingly faces danger and in difficult situations preserves his subtle, national humour. He is given definite features that show him to be a product of the Soviet order; which first of all is shown in a feeling of responsibility for his homeland, and he part of a maker of history.

The humour which pervades the entire poem is deeply national in character. It springs not only from the jokes, endless sayings and aphorisms of the hero, but also from the humour of the author himself, a humour that shows admiration and love for his people.

Moscow. V. Errnilov.

(Apropos, the award of the King's Gold Medal for Poetry, which made a promising start ten years ago, appears to have fallen into desuetude.—Ed.)

Wood-Robin

SOMEWHERE in this ravine
(Pale green on deeper green)
A thrush calls unseen.

Wood-wind nor 'cello string
Nor any man-made thing
Rivals this note of his.

Man maketh music, it is true,
Now hush! . . . hear what a bird can do
By crystal sound threaded on silences.

Baltimore, Maryland. *Eleanor Glenn Wallis.*

Dynamics of American Poetry: CXI

Isabel Fiske Conant, whose qualities of mind and heart have been making themselves known through her writing life, which comprises contributions to *Christian Century, Christian Science Monitor, Herald-Tribune, Providence Journal, The Vermonter, Voices*, gives us her latest collection, *Sky-Color* (Kaleidograph Press).

Mrs. Conant has the good fortune to be wintering in Miami. What a Bostonian thinks of Miami the following tells us:

I am used to Massachusetts
And Florida seems strange
With flame-flowers in winter
And summer's year round range.

Here the road reaches,
Going straight and level
To the water-beaches
Where the waves revel.

Still my spirit searches
For branches bent with snow
And for those girlish birches
That together go.

I am used to cold New England,
'Bostonian' means a friend,
Whose cool air is welcome
Where it's summer without end.

Appreciative, very, of the indomitable spirit of Britain, Mrs. Conant celebrates it in "Laughter of London."

It seemed to me I could never laugh again,
Seeing earth's trouble, though it were but half
Of what it is. But, in spite of all the pain
Of its bombardments, I heard London laugh.
I listened, on the air; cross ocean sent
To Winston Churchill, catching the least breath
And each "Hear!" "Hear!", heroically content;
And noble laughter, scorning fear of death.

It is less hard to meet death face to face,
Perhaps, then to imagine him before us;
Distant and scared, though in a still-safe place;
I heard that day brave London's laughter-chorus.
There'll always be an England's name to sing,
While on the air you hear her laughter ring.

I, who have had the good fortune to be, summer after summer, in London, meeting with her good and great, say "Amen!"

The Heart Sings, by Billie Shaw (Bruce Humphries, Inc.), first volume of 30 pages, carries with it the suggestion of a sensitive personality to the joys and the sorrows, the disappointments and glories of our mixed world. A distinctly optimistic, patriotic poem is "Old Glory":

I watched Old Glory unfurl in the breeze,
Its waving loveliness seemed to say:
"I stand for Freedom, I stand for Power,
I symbolize all that is good to-day."
To-day and to-morrow, for all time to come
Old Glory shall wave o'er the free;
Its stripes express the straight, narrow way
That leads to our victory!
The narrow way is the way of God,
Banked with right, with faith, with love;
A love for all, and teaches us to find
The light of Hope from above.
We know that under Old Glory
We shall dare, and do, and win,
Nor wane in faith and courage
Amid the battle's din.
Old Glory, the pride of our Nation;
Old Glory, o'er land and sea
It stands for Freedom's power—
Freedom for you and me!

Miss Shaw's optimism even embraces the writing of poetry:

What is a Poem?
    It's a song that rings the truest
From the heart of one who must sing;
    A personal song of universal application.
The poet sings his song as the thrush
    In the dew of morning;
Like the nightingale in the mists of evening.
    He sings and sings—
And cannot help but go on singing
    A song.

Elizabeth Browne has had no small satisfaction in her publishing of poetry. We find there are six books of which she is the author, and this last volume, *Life Triumphant* (The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa) is a Bookfellow Book. This author writes me, in answer to my question about her life and calling, "The main thing in my life is to write poetry—a party, a good show, a good meal, must all stand aside if I have anything on my mind I want to say." Turning the pages we find inevitably that

the tragic years of the war have coloured many of her poems. Years may have to elapse before we can set aside the terror of it.

I have chosen for you to read, "A Returned Soldier":

The fire of his ambition no longer burns
He turns listlessly from commonplace concerns.
The joy of life has grown cold in his palm
While deep within there dwells a vacant calm.
He is pursued by memory's beckoning light
The sad adventure of a terrible night,
Youthful bodies scattered along the shore
From muddy foxholes they will rise no more.

They will shout and sing and laugh . . . no never!
For all that was human has gone forever.
Can we appreciate all that this has meant,
Can we fill this emptiness with content?
We must do more than simply-peddle grace,
There are many unsolved problems to face.
O God! Grant us all an abiding release
And help us to find . . . the real path to PEACE.

Finding a poem written by the distinguished New Englander, son of Massachusetts, who has walked forward in the great light of his religious conviction, and during this month of February is receiving the *crowning honour* of being pronounced Cardinal in Rome, I was impelled to write him. It is said of Archbishop Spellman that his letters number on Feast Days some six thousand, and out of the many he perhaps chooses a few which he himself answers and he himself signs. Despite the haste of departure attendant on his trip to Rome, he saw to it that I received *No Greater Love* (Scribners). It is a precious volume, of which Cardinal Spellman has given the rights to the New York Foundling Hospital which cares for children without distinction of race, creed or colour. Cardinal Spellman tells us "It is my intention to dedicate this book to our American soldiers, our martyred dead, and the ideals for which they gave their lives. As I was finishing this writing, Franklin Delano Roosevelt died, and I therefore dedicate this book to our boys and to their Commander-in-Chief."

Lord, lift this mighty host that is America;
Reconsecrate us in deep devotion to Thee.
Too oft have we forgot our heritage of faith—
The mess of pottage to our eyes was dear,
The gold within our coffers deadened us;
We, who by nature are between the earth and sky,
Earthward have sunk, and drunk of miraged visions.

But now, reborn,
We lift again to Thee our nation's soul.

Behold, we are Thy wheat,
Nurtured beneath the sunshine of the plains;
We are Thy grapes from vineyards in the sun,
And timber from Thy forest;
Ours are the iron sinews torn from earth's deep breast,
And oil from her rich arteries.

O God, we build anew and dedicate again to Thee
The host and temple of America—
Many we are, in space wide world apart,
But we are one to-day,
Made one by this, our common will:
That righteousness again shall walk among the sons of men . . .

We are a single host of grateful love for Thee,
A single will for universal peace for men,
A single soul of righteousness to come!
Lord, lift this mighty host that is America,
Reconsecrate us now in Thy Son's Holy Name.
Amen.

While writing this appreciation, Archbishop Spellman saw to it that I received his poem entitled "Our Sleeping Soldiers", much featured here now—a poem of four stanzas and eighteen lines in each stanza so I cannot give it space, but from it I have chosen the following:

The multitude of men who at life's threshold,
Met death with courage, firm and unafraid—
Upon their faces fell too soon the shadows,
Too soon came nightfall and an alien grave.

They only ask that we who follow after
May profit by the anguish they have borne.
They ask for men the just peace that they fought for,
The better world that they have died to build.

Dr. Flozari Rockwood, 'because of the exigencies of war publishing,' sends us a pamphlet collection of verses, *Sandpipers and Sea Gulls* (Candor Press, Dexter, Missouri). Dr. Rockwood writes me that she has been a member of the Poetry Society for three or four years, is British born, from Yorkshire, and all her kin with the exception of her husband and daughter live over here. Her people in England seem to be people winning scholarships in various universities in Europe, and Oxford, etc.

In the wild confusion of this moment in history, registering even cosmic turbulence, this reviewer finds herself in a state of surprise that all of the present confusion is forgotten in reading Alex. C. Judson's *Life of Edmund Spenser* (Johns Hopkins Press—Baltimore, Md.). Knowing London, as one knows it visiting for fifteen years in summer, and in that time never having met a fog; thinking of it as I knew it then, I thank Mr. Judson for bringing back the picture of its fascination for the young Spenser.

At the time when I should be reading the *Faery Queen*, I was not at all interested in fairies and did not like the spelling of it! Now, of course, I shall read it—so you see what Mr. Judson has done.

Edmund Spenser deservedly occupies some four pages in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and in Mr. Judson's book, filled with numerous interesting illustrations, one forgets the present and is with the Spensers in Merry London, the Schoolboy Spenser, At Van der Noot's Theatre, Cambridge in the North Parts, the Southern Shepherd's Boy, Gifts and Grace, Leicester, With Lord Grey, Exile Self-Imposed, At Cynthia's Court, Colin Home Again, Elizabeth Boyle, London Re-visited, Last Years, Sleep After Toil. Mr. Judson tells us "much that we know about Spenser's marriage to Elizabeth Boyle is found between the covers of a small octavo volume published in 1595 by Wm. Ponsonby with a title page bearing the words: '*Amoretti and Epithalamion*' ".

What a richness we have here, both in this biography and in the legacy left us by Edmund Spenser, who opened the door to new appreciation of words and their grouping and left us the stanza known as the Spenserian.

The author as a writer of poetry is interested to find how far into the realms of satire the true poets travel. *A Treasury of Satire*, by Edgar Johnson (Simon Schuster) convinces us that they all were there and *are* there in this first comprehensive anthology of satire ever published in English. There is a fine scattering of poetry through this colossal book.

Again a Pulitzer prizewinning poet is tops in the literary world. He brilliantly again establishes his right to first place in American letters with Karl Shapira's *Essay on Rime* (Reynal & Hitchcock), some 70 pages in length, and written, we are told, while a sergeant in the Medical Corps, completing his third year of active duty in the Pacific. When Sergeant Shapira was drafted in the spring before Pearl Harbour he was little known. He was already in New Guinea before his first book *Person, Place and Thing* was published. He was finishing his *Essay in the Netherlands East Indies* a year ago before he had had any chance to realize that his *V Letter* had placed him, among younger writers particularly, at the forefront of his decade. Writing without access to books, this first "Essay" of over 2,000 lines discusses rime in its widest sense. What an achievement! Mr. Shapira knows the difference between a poet and a semanticist and he tells us his wish "is but to call a rose a rose and not a trope". It is no secret to those who read this book that Eliot, Hart Crane and Auden have most impressed him.

The foreword tells us what Shapiro is seeking to prove:

> This is a tract on the treble confusion
> In modern rime. The premise that our verse
> Is in decline had not, I am convinced
> Been honestly attacked or well defended.

Critics in particular have minced matters
By acquiring all the authority to talk.
I ask you not to balk at my presumption
But with a certain reasonable kindness
Toward the subject to attempt this study
I think it is high time that everybody
With a true love of rime assert his views.

I am happy to find in the foreword this poet's clear statement:

. . . . . "To use
Language emotionally and not as number
Is my intention:"

Are we not glad that Mr. Shapiro is but 31 years old? We quickly picture how rich his coming years will be and his enrichment of literature. Those, and they are many, who read and write love poetry cannot afford to miss Sergeant Shapiro's *Essay on Rime*.

Oscar Williams is well fitted to compile *An Anthology of the War Poetry of the 20th Century*, which together with many photographs, brings a deeply realizing sense of manner in which war touched the poets, both in War 1 and War 2, presenting 500 pages of gripping expressions of many of the admittedly great poets of the English-speaking language.

Are you interested in the drama?—I am—for the reason that where there is no drama there is no life. We have all played in our childhood days a game called Still Pond—no more moving. Do you remember? On my editorial desk I find evidence that many people are interested in the drama and if you were fortunate enough to purchase the four books I have beside me you would learn a great deal about it, creditably.

The first is *The Old Stock Company School of Acting*—A Study of The Boston Museum by Edward Wm. Mammen, published by Trustees of the Public Library of Boston—a book very descriptive of America's early drama days, with fine illustrations of old Boston. Toward the latter half of this interesting book the 4th Chapter gives us Instruction of Beginners, The Number and Conditions of Rehearsals, and Replicas of Playbills.

The second volume is *Shakespeare and The Popular Dramatic Tradition*, by S. L. Bethell, M.A. (Cantab), introduction by T. S. Elliott (Duke Univ. Press, Durham, N. Carolina). Don't miss this book, whether you only care to read Shakespeare and not to see it acted—which by the way simply means you have never seen Shakespeare played at Stratford-on-Avon. Next to the Bible, perhaps Shakespeare and all that Shakespeare means, is a great step in human understanding. Mr. Bethel writes of Conventionalism and Naturalism, of Plane of Reality, Anachronism and the Treatment of Time, two chapters on the Treatment of Character, Further Ramifications of Multiconsciousness, Certain Problems. A point which Mr. Bethell immediately develops and one which I had not given thought to and perhaps you have not, is that Shakespeare desires that you know at once, and all the way through, it is a *Play*.

The next book on the drama is by Alan Reynolds Thompson, *The Anatomy of Drama*—published by University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles. Reader, if you want to write a play, be it Comedy or Tragedy, Satire of Iconoclastic, you may learn from Mr. Thompson's book much that is worth knowing. The titles will convey some impression: Dramas as a Narrative Medium, The Illusion of Reality, Sources of Dramatic Effect, Drama and Poetry. Mr. Thompson tells us, "Both sides of the footlights are important—equally important. Actors must be well trained, yes: but audiences need training too." This book can be used to great advantage as a text book for courses in dramatic theory and in playwriting. Mr. Thompson teaches dramatic literature in the University of California.

The fourth book is *Our Theatre To-day* (published by Samuel French) which purports to be a Composite Handbook on the Art, Craft and Management of the Contemporary Theatre, and many interesting opinions are herein expressed, edited by Herschel L. Bricker of the University of Maine. Every page of this readable book contains something you will want to know. I just happened to open at page 281, to find Technical Methods, by Cleon Throckmorton.

Let us congratulate Chas. Scribners's Sons that to-day, January 7th, 1946, this distinguished firm of publishers reaches the hundredth year mark, and very uncommon is the fact that this house has been in the hands of one family these many years. A Charles Scribner the third is presently its head, and a fourth, now in the Navy, will be reporting for work as soon as he returns from service. Quoting from the *Times* editorial page of this morning: "Its roster of authors is its particular pride: Henry James, John Galsworthy, James Barrie, Theodore Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Henry Adams, Robert Louis Stevenson, Edith Wharton, George Santayana, Josiah Royce, Henry Cabot Lodge, James Huneker, Anton Chekhov, Brander Matthews, Henry van Dyke, Ring Lardner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe are a few.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

I would like to enlarge my subscription to £1, partly because I have found much joy and derived a great deal of constructive help from reading THE POETRY REVIEW; also I have happy memories of four delightful visits to 33 Portman Square.

K. BELL, York.

Having just started to take THE POETRY REVIEW, and finding therein a criticism of my first piece of writing, I am grateful to have found (for, strangely enough, THE POETRY REVIEW is not widely obtainable) that at last there does exist a journal that deals in poetry as opposed to the "fads" of the between-the-wars era, which I find comparable to jazz as compared with music.

BAYLY G. AKROYD, W.11.

ROBERT NICHOLS

The letter of Diana Momber in the November/December issue is a timely appreciation of the work of Robert Nichols, and I would like to follow it up with an answer to her enquiry for more information.

I entirely agree with her apt remarks on "the proud old lineage" and the "essential weakness of the moderns". On the flyleaf of *Such Was My Singing* appears a fine review of this poet who may indeed "claim a place in the great succession of our English romantics". This volume, his last, was his own selection of his best work.

It is my privilege to enjoy the friendship of his relatives, Captain and Mrs. Pusey, who sent my POETRY REVIEW to Mrs. Robert Nichols. She has kindly written me with details which I think would interest readers, and allows me to quote from her letter. "He was an Elizabethan through and through. . . . He loved fine music, rich words, grand painting, bright clothes, flowers, sunshine and fun. It all poured out of him, his thoughts and feelings of these things—a wonderful talker but a poor listener. . . . He was completely genuine and unselfconscious. He talked because he felt like it, not to make an effect. . . . It's hard for some folk to believe that such a flow of language, fire and life can be natural. He lived right up to the top of his bent always and wore himself out. . . . There was no other way for him. He has always been read by 'the passionate few' only. Mr. Charles Morgan's review (published in the *Times Literary Supplement* shortly after his death) contained real praise and critical acumen such as rejoiced my heart". Speaking of her disappointment that he is not more widely read, she says, "It is not as if he were difficult or obscure. . . . Maybe he is too highly coloured and romantic for English souls revelling in 'understatement'. Robert did not understand that word."

It seems to me nothing short of tragic—in an epoch of tragedy—that so much precious paper is squandered on trash published as poetry while there are heirs of the great ones who are so little known. It is always difficult in a short space to quote from these, and I need not add to the gems chosen by Diana Momber to speak for the poetic genius of Robert Nichols. The Great War poems of 1914-1918 are the best known, but it is the later work of his maturity which crown his genius. One poem alone, "The Sprig of Lime", is worthy enough to ensure to this poet the homage of posterity. The *Times* says, "Nothing can prevent poetry like this from taking its place among the permanent possessions of the race."

"For 'tis the mind which makes the body rich", says Shakespeare, but it is when the mind bespeaks the heart on rhythmic waves of sound that poetry is born. Francis of Assisi, poet and saint, finds the perfect expression for this divine gift:

> "Not the voice but the vow,
> Not clamour but love,
> Not the stringed instrument but the heart
> Sounds in the ear of God."

Robert Nichols is of the company which is tuned in to the universal cadences of the spirit.

Hove. IRENE M. HEATON.

OF THE MODERNS

The article by W. G. Bebbington amazes me. Not only am I abashed by the presumptuous dissection of Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier", and the bold appraisal of poems by David Gascoyne and Roy Fuller, but the whole tenor of thought leaves me speechless!

I can only say that young men—of whom I am one—in their thousands still do echo the sentiments of Brooke and Nichols; still think of themselves as "pulses in the eternal mind"; still pray, and ask their friends to pray for them, in the heat and dust of battle; and are proud to acknowledge faith in a God Who sustains them in their tragic day. And for these an intellectual approach to poetry is utter vanity. They know that true poetry flows from the heart and speaks to the heart. Its blood is emotion; its flesh music; its life is faith and fire.

Modern poetry, as defined by Mr. Bebbington, will die because it is faithless. To be "certain of nothing" is spiritual suicide; to worship the intellect is idolatry of a most dangerous kind. That this expressed faithlessness should die is inevitable, but let us beware lest the agnostics drag the world down with them!

Poets are visionaries. What matters metre, rhyme, image, symbol or figure of speech if the poetic content is diseased? The world needs comfort in its anguish, vision in its darkness, a rock of faith in its sea of uncertainty: God grant there are enough poets to give it these, and to call mankind back to build, not an annex to "the Hall of Fame", but the New Jerusalem up on the rubble of the old.

Calverleigh, Devon. WILFRED H. BARTLETT.

IN DEFENCE OF RUPERT BROOKE

Regarding "The Moderns Without Contempt" by W. G. Bebbington which appeared in your last issue and was concerned with the supposed merits and demerits of "modern" poetry, may I venture to express an opinion which I think will not be entirely unsupported by the multitude of poesy's genuine followers. First of all, how can one compare, or hope to compare, two great epochs in the history of poetry in the manner utilised by Mr. Bebbington, to delve into the ever-widening tracts of known and unknown "poets" and emerge with two examples from each period whose claims to being representative of their contemporaries must depend entirely on the personal taste and convictions of the claimant? Such an attempt is doomed to failure. Indeed, could any two poems be considered representative of the host of their contemporaries? Of course not. One must judge and condemn individually, for that which is paradise to one is hell to another.

As to the criticisms of Brooke—". . . a youth lacking imagination and artistic originality,"—no living being, whoever or whatever he may be, could uphold such a precarious statement. Brooke's poetry contains a blend of imagination which triumphs over the effigy of war—an effigy over which all men must triumph if they are to succeed in turning life's eternal round into a source and reason for happiness instead of a cause for unmitigated despair. From the pangs of despair and discontentment wars are given birth. But imagination, again, is purely individualistic; man must have imagination to put pen to paper and what one would deem "imagination" another would label "nonsense" or "lacking in imagination".

As to Brooke's alleged "lacking in artistic originality", we see to-day the ugly results of an over-active *in*artistic originality which so often degenerates into the absurd. To write poetry which has survived and will continue to survive, despite the weary and unceasing efforts of others to impede its progress and to bribe humanity with the threat of literary damnation should they continue in their reverence, that is to be a genius. It is, indeed, the supreme test of a genius. By this I do not mean to imply that all Brooke's poetic output might be placed under that head, but the lines which are recognised to be his best gave much promise for the future. And does not the very fact of the continued survival of his works point to an artistic originality which possesses the attribute of a veiled subtlety to prevent it from becoming tediously obvious—a technique subordinated to the muse, instead of the muse to technique.

Mr. Bebbington says that by 1918 ". . . this main truth of the war had been definitely expressed by poets, of whom Brooke, however, was not one. He had caught a passing fever, but he had not 'learnt in suffering what he taught in song' ". Brooke was already endowing "a foreign field that is for ever England" with the fruits of his unspent genius. Had he lived to see the victorious end of that gigantic struggle we might have heard the voice of a man, no longer a youth, breaking forth in the maturity which comes of suffering. He must be judged by that which was accomplished, that unique poetry which we thank heaven for sparing from the claws of death. England will ever lament the early passing of a bird unfledged, for though his youthful wings carried him into the very bosom of the dead, yet they had not known the revealing strength which comes of full maturity. Their potency, alas, was never to be fulfilled.

By this I do not seek to enter the field of barren argument, I only seek to place my tribute at the feet of a promising poet whose full capacity cannot now be revealed; a budding genius who will never be denied a strong defence while Englishmen remain true to their hearts. The difference 'twixt genius and metallic brilliance is as indisputable as it is wide; it refuses denial or inversion.

Brooke, Mr. Bebbington says, was at the close of the war superseded by others whose voices were more up-to-date, more in keeping with the times: "Gone already, so far as serious, sensitive men were concerned

was the subject of Brooke's sonnet: his temporary truth was already out of date . . .". What though the significance of its day had passed? Do not all days pass beyond the portals of the human memory? Yet they are no less dear for, ultimate, their very youthfulness will prompt as many cherished turnings of the yellowing pages as there are days gone by. Who are we to deny the flame of a genius which knew not the unleashing of atomic energy? Should we not rather cling to him as an escape from the present fear of butcherdom which vents its constant spite upon us? Though Adam and Eve have themselves been outmoded and placed in the crowded chambers of fiction, does this in its turn signify that the poetic fulfilment of "Paradise Lost" must be denied us? Must we scoff at its outdated truths? We Darwinists, can we learn nothing from its glorious mission? Jean Kenward, in her article "On the Art of Writing Poetry" (POETRY REVIEW, November, 1945), says of the true poet: ". . . he dismisses the boundaries of Time and Space, making for himself an escape tunnel into Eternity. This exquisite detachment results, paradoxically, in a complete unification with everything that is alive. The anonymity of the years, the stars, the earth, are to the poet his refuge and his being." Arthur Row asks in his article "The Purpose of Poetry" in the same issue: "But what is the prime purpose and exercise of the labours of these giants of literature? Is it the *matter* or *the manner of telling it* which most absorbs their minds and is the over-ruling factor with them?" He comes to the definite conclusion that it is *the manner of telling* which constitutes more than anything a just claim to genius. If we are to measure literary effort through the centuries by the narrow rod of Mr. Bebbington we must come to the conclusion that every masterpiece and every master from Shakespeare to those of the present day are out-of-date in their views and topics and should therefore be discarded. The stamp of time is unmerciful; it knows no bribery, nor does it permit of unnatural corruption.

May I humbly make use of those undying words which knew, originally, a finer context?—

> "I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, but here I am to speak what I do know. You all did love him once, not without cause: what cause withholds you then, to mourn for him? O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason. Bear with me, my heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, and I must pause till it come back to me."

And when all's said, the argument won or lost, what better are we for it? What have our unborn critics gained from this controversy? That which appeals to the heart and the soul and the mind of man will ever? be his companion, though the hounds of heaven bear down upon him for his sacrilege. I would therefore advise Mr. Bebbington to sacrifice his odious comparisons to the higher claims of POETRY which he, no doubt, also seeks to further. Let poesy herself take command of the vacated pages and the melodies of every true poet, whate'er his span or date of birth,

inflict their inspiration upon the struggling aspirants who seek to glorify them.

Birmingham,8, March 25th. MARY V. KERNICK.

HOWARD PARSONS AND MILTON

I cannot help agreeing with Mr. Howard Parsons when he says that renewed criticism of "Paradise Lost" is an urgent matter: but I find it very hard to agree with anything else he sets forward. I cannot support him (or any other critic) when he says that Satan is the hero of "Paradise Lost". I would like to refer him to Hazlitt . . . "He (Milton) . . . did not scruple to give the devil his due. Some persons may think he has carried his liberality too far, and injured the cause he professed to espouse by making him the chief person in the poem." Hazlitt points out that far worse danger would lie in making God look ridiculous by making Satan anything but a most powerful adversary. Milton used Satan to show in the immensity of his wickedness the very boundlessness of God's goodness: but the real hero of the poem is neither God nor Satan. These are the two sides of the eternal triangle, the two dramatic forces at work. The hero is Adam upon whom the wrath of both sides fell and in whom all mankind through ever age, is epitomised.

Milton here borrows from Greek tragedy, making Adam almost an instrument in hands entirely outside his control: but not quite. He catches the superb unexpectedness of Shakespeare, the true waywardness of human minds, the absurd yet profound triviality of our nature when, hearing of her dismissal from Paradise, Eve says:

> "O unexpected stroke, worse than of death!
> Must I thus leave thee Paradise? Thus leave
> Thee native soil, these happie walkes and shades
> Fit Haunt of Gods? Where I had hope to spend
> Quiet though sad the respit of that day
> That must be mortal to us both."

Eve then addresses the flowers and "Thee lastly Nuptial Arbour" and we see, not fear of death and destruction as we might expect, but the sudden sublimation of all human tears into a homesickness and loss of familiar things.

Further, I cannot see by what possible conception of good and evil Mr. Parsons concludes that Satan never utters a low thought or does a base act. It is not sufficient that Satan had envied God and deserved Hell. That boundless malignity must needs now envy man, and, enraged by that envy contrive to ruin him in the hope that this would revenge God. In the world to-day, as ever, there is no worse sin than envy. It is the mainspring of all human wickedness. From this one original sin proceed murder, theft, jealousy and every other crime that can be catalogued. To say that Satan never does a base act is to say that envy is no sin.

The criticism of Milton's idea of heaven is a more abstract enterprise, I do not think it fair to suggest that an endeavour to describe a place so obviously beyond the reach of the human mind is puerile merely because the poet suggests that it is place to sing about. It may be impossible to imagine Archimedes living there. We are not asked to. Milton endeavours to show us a place where everybody is divinely happy. As the frailty of our intellect at once leads us to say "ah! A place where there is unlimited free food, free beer, and seven days off per week", Milton describes such a place. I for one, would like to be there! The intelligentia may say it is a vacuum. Let them construct their own foodless, wineless and laborious Limbo. Milton is talking to the regretably large and frail majority of human beings.

That Satan resented being removed from Paradise we know: but Mr. Parsons suggests that the subsequent Satanic speeches, of which there is no finer example of sour grapes, are really designed to show us that Satan was heartily pleased to be out of that peculiarly angelic void. If this were so why then was Satan so anxious to prevent man from enjoying its fruits? Surely he could have done no better than to see that Adam avoided the tree of knowledge like the plague and that the whole human race should suffer, with all possible speed this "insupportable vacancy".

Finally I strongly refute the statement that Milton justifies God to men by allowing Satan to bring about their fall. God is justified, as He must needs always be, by His infinite mercy and compassion, taking away Paradise and giving us the world, leaving us to return to dust and soil and redeeming us with the blood of His only Son. "Paradise Lost" designs to show us the glory of man: but it teaches us the lesson of his folly. To talk about "freedom of self reliance" is both in Milton's day and in our own, entirely futile. Freedom consists more often of restraint than endeavour. In this respect the poem carries with it a lesson most pointed for us who live in nineteen forty-six. For another tree of knowledge has sprung up in our midst and as the last succeeded in blasting Adam out of Paradise, this one, in the cause of this miscalled "Progress" is like to blast us out of our remaining earth.

Herne Hill, S.E.24. PROSPER DOWDEN.

DESERT ISLAND POEMS

In a letter quoted in the November-December issue of THE POETRY REVIEW, Capt. T. N. Foster states:

> The atmosphere which this publication creates is a mental haven in these times, when so many bewildered minds write their sad bewilderings in almost unintelligible form (*re* T. S. Eliot school).

But if art is to have a definite value in life, it cannot be escapist; the myth that art and the common life have separate spheres of existence has long been dispelled. Poetry, moreover, is something more than a pastime,

and its primary purpose is not that of a sand-dune for the ostriches which are so unhappily common at this critical time.

Further, Captain Foster makes the dangerous implication that all modern poetry is to be connected with T. S. Eliot. Eliot, with Pound, Hopkins, Owen and other pioneers, has of course greatly influenced the trends of poetry; but there are very few contemporary poets whose work bears sufficient resemblance to his to merit any such classification as "Eliot school". Indeed, in connecting Eliot at all with "sad bewilderings", Capt. Foster is mistaken, for Eliot is one of the few living writers with a clear mind and a definite message. Capt. Foster, having overcome the difficulties of a style with which he is unfamiliar, should find not only a mental but a spiritual haven in such a drama as "The Rock."

But the only reason I have concerned myself with this short extract from a reader's letter is that the thoughts expressed are typical of THE REVIEW's dogged support of the traditional elements in literature. Now, in a limited way, this attitude is valuable, for it effects a balance with those regrettable publications which have severed themselves completely from the past; Eliot himself writes somewhere that a poem entirely original is a poem entirely bad. But it is regrettable if the results of *Desert Island Poems* truly represent the views of readers—readers of whom many are members of a society whose great purpose is to promote "a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it". It is almost a mockery of Matthew Arnold.

I do not propose here to restate the frequently expressed justifications of modern art which appear with every new work by Bartok and exhibition of Picasso; my humble pleadings would have little impression on the prejudiced; but I would like to make some particular comments on Mr. Humphreys' interesting analysis. First, the list of the thirty favourite poems. Taken as a whole, it must strike one immediately as a very hackneyed collection; and, though a hackneyed poem may well be great, that "Sea Fever" which has no claim to greatness should "beat" "Kubla Khan" is a severe criticism of taste. I would support Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" as "winner", certainly of the poems mentioned, but some of those mentioned should not be there at all. Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" certainly does not deserve fourth place. It is questionable, even, if it is the greatest of his war sonnets, let alone his other poems; and the inclusion of "Grantchester" and the "Great Lover" strengthens my suspicion that many of the entrants selected their poems from rather sugary anthologies. But what is more alarming is Brooke's exalted position as "favourite of this century"! Yeats and De la Mare, Hardy, Bridges, even Masefield, not to mention the *betes-noirs* "Moderns", are of unquestionably greater stature; and, though many authorities, notably the Cambridge History, are unfairly damning in their estimations of Brooke, it is true that he has no claim to *greatness*. (In the book I am writing on him I have gone to the pains of a chapter in stressing this point.) "Who knows", asks Mr. Humphreys, "how our grandchildren

will choose between . . . Brooke, De la Mare, and Yeats?" One could have a very fair guess.

And now for the "Eliot school". "One must admit," says Mr. Humphreys, drawing a fair conclusion from his statistics, "that between 'ancient' and 'modern' the moderns were nowhere. Eliot was mentioned eleven times in all, Auden five, MacNiece three, C. Day Lewis three." I have had my say on Eliot. (I am sure he is one of our greatest poets. His latest poem, "Little Gidding", last of the "Four Quartets", is worthy to stand by any poem of the century, though it is too long, anyway, for *Desert Island* purposes.) Auden would be harder to defend. But I would like to say something of MacNiece and Day Lewis, for there are few characteristics of form or content in their latest writings which would irk the most convention-loving reader, and Day Lewis, indeed, has recently developed a striking resemblance to Hardy. His sonnet sequence, "O Dreams, O Destinations!" and MacNiece's "The Kingdom", each from the poets' latest books, should be read by all who doubt the authenticity of modern poetry.

Finally, I would say, though informed opinion is inevitably the final judgment of a work of art, popular contemporary opinion is a dangerous means of assessing greatness; and statistics from a particular section of the poetry reading public, though interesting, must inevitably prove misleading.

Catterick Camp. TIMOTHY ROGERS.

(Mr. Humphreys, who based his conclusions on the evidence supplied him by a variety of readers, is now in Japan dealing with war criminals and unable to continue this discussion, even if a further reply from him were necessary. It is no disparagement of the splendid new Cecil Day Lewis and MacNiece poems to point out that although their qualities may be recognised they have not been sufficiently savoured to be yet in the category of favourite poems. By the way, Trooper Rogers contributed a re-valuation of Rupert Brooke to THE POETRY REVIEW.—*Ed.*)

GEOFFREY MOORE AND HERBERT READ'S POEMS

May I be permitted to answer Mr. Geoffrey Moore's letter in the last POETRY REVIEW and justify my admiration for Mr. Herbert Read's "Song for the Spanish Anarchists"? I had not expected such a lengthy tirade to emanate from my few lines remarking upon the absence from Mr. Moore's article of any mention of what I consider to be Mr. Read's two best poems: and I should think that these two would be generally accepted as two of his best, at least, and not to be omitted from an article upon the poet's works—although, as Mr. Moore points out, he was not concerned about establishing any "best" or "second-best". But, upon his three-page reply, I am urged to answer *his* criticism of *my* opinions.

Mr. Moore says that " 'great' is a term usually reserved for the achievement of Homer or Shakespeare or, at the very least, of Milton, say, or

Keats." I strongly resent this dogmatic statement, which omits Shelley, Byron, Browning, Yeats, Burns and numerous other *great* poets, and such "masterpieces" as "The Rubaiyat", Gray's "Elegy", "The Deserted Village", "Promethius Unbound", "Childe Harold" and so many others, not to forget all the beautiful lyrics of the above-mentioned poets and the "Desert Island" pieces of Mr. Humphrey's recent adjudication. However, the poem under consideration *is*, as Mr. Moore pointedly announced, "Simple, sensuous and passionate": in defining poetry as being a combination of beautiful-sounding words, born of inspiration, and naturally arranged in rhyming (or *not*, as with most of the "modern" variety, it seems!) lines of a definite metrical association and resulting in a passionate outburst appealing through the mind to the senses, I submit that the three characteristics Mr. Moore attributes to this poem are almost essential in a "real" poem. The allegory of the first two and the last two lines of the first verse I regard as sublime. Here it is for judgment:

"The golden lemon is not made
but grows on a green tree;
A strong man and his crystal eyes
is a man born free."

I cannot see that it is inferior to the Blake verse, or that "golden", "green" and "crystal" are superficial. If Mr. Moore so dissected any poem it would hardly remain such; he would make this one read:

The lemon is not made
but grows on a tree;
A man and his eyes
is a man born free,

which alters the sublime to the ridiculous. "Golden" and "green" and "crystal" must be three of the more beautiful words used in poetry, which embodies "imagery" and beautiful words, and their use marks the main difference between poetry and prose: again, what other adjective could Mr. Read use instead of "crystal" for Mr. Moore's satisfaction? There is a certain look in blue eyes which can be only expressly conveyed in "crystal": who has not seen *that* look? By Mr. Read's adjective the exact expression is conveyed to the reader's mind; and "a strong man" matches perfectly the 'crystal eyes".

So Mr. Moore is dissatisfied with the simplicity and also the superficiality ("golden", "green" and "crystal") of this one poem! And he does not see the connection of "a golden lemon growing on a green tree" and "a strong man and his crystal eyes is a man born free"! Well, I certainly do, and regard the allegory as the *piece de resistance* of the whole, and was that which attracted me instantly when I first read the poem. I cannot go further than Mr. Read in an attempt to convey it to Mr. Moore.

I have already written much more than I intended, and will limit myself to the defence of this one poem, which is the most important, and will conclude with the admission that I never had the opportunity of a

college introduction to poetry, and have little or no knowledge of the technical terms and structures of a poem, but claim that I instinctively realize what are poems and also write them and know they are. And I still have my own opinion that this poem is as "great" a one as many of the great lyrics of Shelley, Burns, Byron and Yeats: in which, it seems, I also differ from Mr. Moore. Perhaps our standards of education are too far apart!

Romford, March 21st. THOS. ASTORE.

FOR SIGHT NOT SOUND

Besides writing poetry, I sometimes read poetry in public. I find it difficult to get *new* poems suitable for this purpose. This prompts me to ask the question: How many poems of the present day are of use for reading or reciting? My answer would be: Very few indeed. Most are too vague, too involved and too difficult to understand when read for the first time. Indeed, the meanings of many of them, in their entirety as well as in phraseology, baffle the average intelligent reader so much that a mere listener cannot be expected to understand them at all. This cannot be said of any of the poems that *live;* these are easily understood, but are classics nevertheless.

I contend that poems for reciting should be intelligible and interesting; they should also tell a story expressed in the most suitable language and rhythms at the command of the writer. They should delight the ear, arouse the emotions and please the senses of the hearer.

How many new poems satisfy these conditions?

I do not think that incomprehensible poems (whatever their virtues) can have any real value, and can have little chance of survival.

Maidstone. (Mrs.) E. M. KELLY.
"Editha Melbourne."

Sacrifice

NOT as bees extract
From the summer flower
The sweetness of the honey,
With the passing hour.

Not as pungent perfume,
On an idle day,
Drifts from apple blossoms
Out across the way.

Sacrifice is woven
Of a sterner weave,
And the fragrance lingers
From the flowers we leave.

Kansas. *Hazel Griffith Davis.*

The Premium Editors' Report

THE competition just concluded has attracted some new contestants but as yet nobody has appeared who much disturbs the hegemony of those old competitors whose names have become familiar at the head of my lists. But the growth in number of entries is enough for the present, for the capacity of the minor poet to write a good poem occasionally is only exceeded by that of the good performer to write badly at times and it is most encouraging that it should be so. There can thus be no foregone conclusions in a poetry competition as there might be in almost any other contest—not only those where physical prowess is tested but even in the case of the other arts. For the fact is that poetry is by much the most subtle, the least predictable and the hardest to regiment or discipline, since having the minimum of techniques it offers no considerable physical barrier to that sudden effluence of spiritual fire. All that we can say with certainty is that the good poet will write well oftener than his lesser brother and that in technical perfection he will usually surpass him. But that, I think, is a matter of character not of mind, of will not of intellect, of sincerity not of cleverness.

It is certainly remarkable that the better poetry seems to come from those who possess a certain painstaking ability with detail—a neat, as opposed to slipshod, care for what might be thought the less fundamental desiderata of their art. They seek perfection in all things appertaining to their work, will agonise upon a comma, cock an ear to a syllable and weigh each word against the finest and most delicate shades of meaning and appropriateness. Moreover, these persons even condescend to the merest trivia, like the rules which were laid down for the governance of this competition. Never will it be my sad duty to disqualify one of them on a discipline of this sort for they have seen the necessity and acknowledged the propriety of regulations and, being orderly folk, do not forget them. But it may happen that a good poem will come, as it can by that sudden and surprising visitation of inspiration, from one less meticulous in that attention to detail which he would do so well to cultivate, and it would be a thousand pities to have to deny such an entry its proper reward; but a competition must be conducted fairly and its rules vindicated, if it is to have any value at all.

Therefore please mark *each poem* with the words, "For Premium Competition", put your name and address upon each and enclose a stamped and addressed envelope. Few competitors did all these things and those few included our better competitors. Finally two poems only are now allowed.

I should not regard this month's entry as having reached our highest level of excellence. That is possibly due to the time of year and its trying weather. For whatever else he is or is not, the poet is sensitive to the seasons and is likely to become hoarse in an east wind if it be too persistent. But something else must have accounted for the sudden outbreak

of abbreviations, of which I do not remember so many on any previous occasion. "O'er", "ne'er", "e'er", "it's", "he's", etc., were like a rash in some verses; and in some cases just one of these ugly little slovenlinesses was sufficient to spoil the whole. I realise that our great poets of the past made use of some of these devices but there was probably a colloquial use to excuse them. The fact remains that to-day they both look and sound wrong. To some, no doubt, they seem pretentious as being archaic; to me they protest a difficulty unsurmounted and, in consequence, a lack in their user of that desire for perfection which is the mark of the poet.

For the rest, the same faults are apparent in about the same measure as usual. How few are they who profit by advice. Breaks in rhythm, so abrupt that one's pleasure is all spoiled were common enough to make me wonder whether it is even a rare habit with competitors to read their work aloud. If so then they cannot play fair, giving each word and syllable its exactly just emphasis or stress. I am not, of course, referring to those subtle unevennesses, or to those fine variations of cadence, which can lend a new charm to a poem, but to the very blatancies of oral insensitivity which have no conceivable excuse except to despoil. Let us at least be good versifiers, for this is the first of our necessities. It is within this frame that the inspiration which we all seek will be enshrined and it would be a grievous thing to flaw its crystal with the kick of a clumsy superfluous foot.

Choice of the winning poem was again a matter of long consideration, and eventual compromise, and the prize money will once again be divided, this time among three competitors, as follows:

£5. M. Spark, Helena Club, London, W.2;
£3. P. E. C. Lyth, Barnes, London, S.W.13;
£2. Phoebe Hesketh, Bolton, Lancashire.

The first of these, a description of a state of mind after a visit to the recent exhibition of Picasso's pictures, owes its place to its vigour and logical insight and the ability with which the theme and form have been handled. The imaginative sincerity of the performance seems to show us the painter's own destructive nihilism in a sort of dream picture. Here it is:

On Seeing the Picasso-Matisse Exhibition, London, December, 1945

"At the end of a long journey
my nostalgic thoughts ran faster than the train.

The house will be cool, and the lawn
sweet with rain,
How I long for the rhythmic noise
of the lawnmower; somehow it seems
to encourage lazy dreams,
a background for the indoor joys
of books in their places,
and that disturbing sight,

the pale hands and faces
of the large Rembrandt, lent me for a night
or two, to please.
And on the table by the window, ill at ease,
my silent porcelain shepherd boy will stand
lifting his hand
shyly to catch the sun,
his fingertips so perfect, every one.

They will be expecting me.
The tray will be set for tea.

Let the trees, torn by their roots
from the earth, let the winding border,
strewn about in a vast disorder,
new-grown leaves and half-grown shoots,
tell of the hand that laid them bare,
tell what a mighty force has been
to waste and wither the living green.
They will say who has planted there
strange, elemental, half-formed things
only seen in a dream of fright
dreamt on a dark-long anguished night,
measured with ghostly clamourings.

Gaily, I came home to tea.
A Demon was expecting me.

Demon-monster mowing grass
with your hands of death,
cursing like a gardener
underneath your breath,
muttering your grievances
in the time-worn way,
tell me, Demon-gardener,
what is it you say?
'I am saying,' he replied,
'in this world of men
plane and willow, beech and yew
will never grow again.'

No one was in the house. The door
was open wide, The polished floor
wet from an upturned vase. In the window bay
my lovely silent shepherd lay
pounded to fragments, crushed again to clay.

Wildly I opened the cupboard under the stairs.
Yes, the things were gone, the harmless wares,
my own familiar rubbish, bits of wire,
broken umbrellas, jars, a rubber tyre,
electric fittings, dusty books, a few
tins. *My* property. The cat had fled.
Oh, then I knew
that there was nothing more that I could do.
except look out of the window at the day,
the field, horses, hay.

But the field was gone, and in its stead
the land lay cloven. A great gash seared
the earth. Beyond, a moving mountain reared
noisily, like some monster whose blind head
breathes fire, its music clutching at my wits.
At least, I thought then, there is a splendour
a splash and dash in chaos. I do not wonder
that to a creature of this turmoil,
to a child of thunder
my passionate desire
for carved, poetic objects,
dreams dreamed by the fire,
fragile abstract notions,
sensuous balm,
are grey things. Eggshell emotions,
empty as an open palm.

Perhaps, I thought, I might have learnt to hear
one primitive theme in the mountain's symphony, the core
of order, if my ear
were but a hearing-tube and nothing more.
But no dress-circle melody,
no single note of purity was tossed
upon the billows of that tumult. Tuned to harmony,
I am lost."

The names of those whose entries have earned commendation are given below in alphabetical order in each case:

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Wilfred H. Bartlett, Calverleigh;
Katharine Holehouse, Bramhall;
Gwenda Hollander, Solihull;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives;
Thomas M. McGurk, Edinburgh;
Eva Martin, Brighton;
Hubert Riley, Holford;
P. J. J. Roberts, London, N.W.11.

COMMENDED

Catherine Blakiston, Milford;
L. E. Brodie, Chichester;
T. E. Casson, Pennington;
Kathleen M. Clark, Low Moor;
E. Denyer Cox, Birmingham, 31;
Marion Ehlers, London, N.W.6;
E. G. Gardner, Penkhull;
Molly W. Gilbert, Swindon;
Mary R. Gullery, Wanganui, N.Z.;
F. M. G. Howe, Hove
J. Munro MacLennan, Eastbourne;
Diana M. Moore, London, W.2;
D. Parker, Gerrards Cross;
Juanita Pierse, London, W.11;
David Russell, Holmbury St. Mary;
H. Broadberry Seaman, Ruislip;
Joanida Winch, Osterley;
Loie Worley, Wanstead.

Old Man on Holiday

UNDER a cliff in Smuggler's Bay,
He crouched upon the shingle beach
As if the breach with everyday

Had been too much for him to bear,
And made him something less than man,
As sorrow can, or fear, or care.

He let the smooth white pebbles run
Through work-worn fingers, burned to brown,
Then, looking down, selected one.

He held it there, within his hand,
This stone, sea-worn the ages through,
And warm it grew, as sun-baked sand.

Then as he raised his head to see
The foam-flecked green, he heard the call,
The voice of all eternity,

Of sea-waves breaking on the shore.
The pebble slithered to the strand.
For ever and for evermore,

One with the myriads it lay.
The intermittent boom and lull,
The wheeling gull, the falling spray,

The old stone church's distant chime,
Relief-carved as a cameo
This treasured moment out of time.

Alice Lunt.